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CHRONICLES OF CAPSTAN CABIN

OR THE

CHILDREN'S HOUR

J. JACKSON WRAY.

600065448X

Chronicles of

CAPSTAN CABIN.

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CAPSTAN CABIN;

OR,

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

BY

J. JACKSON WRAY.

AUTHOR OF 'NESTLETON MAGNA,' 'PETER PENGELLY,' ETC.

SECOND THOUSAND.

LONDON:

WESLEYAN-METHODIST SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

2, LUDGATE CIRCUS BUILDINGS;

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,

2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD; AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1878.

251. c. 696.

CAPSTAN CABIN.

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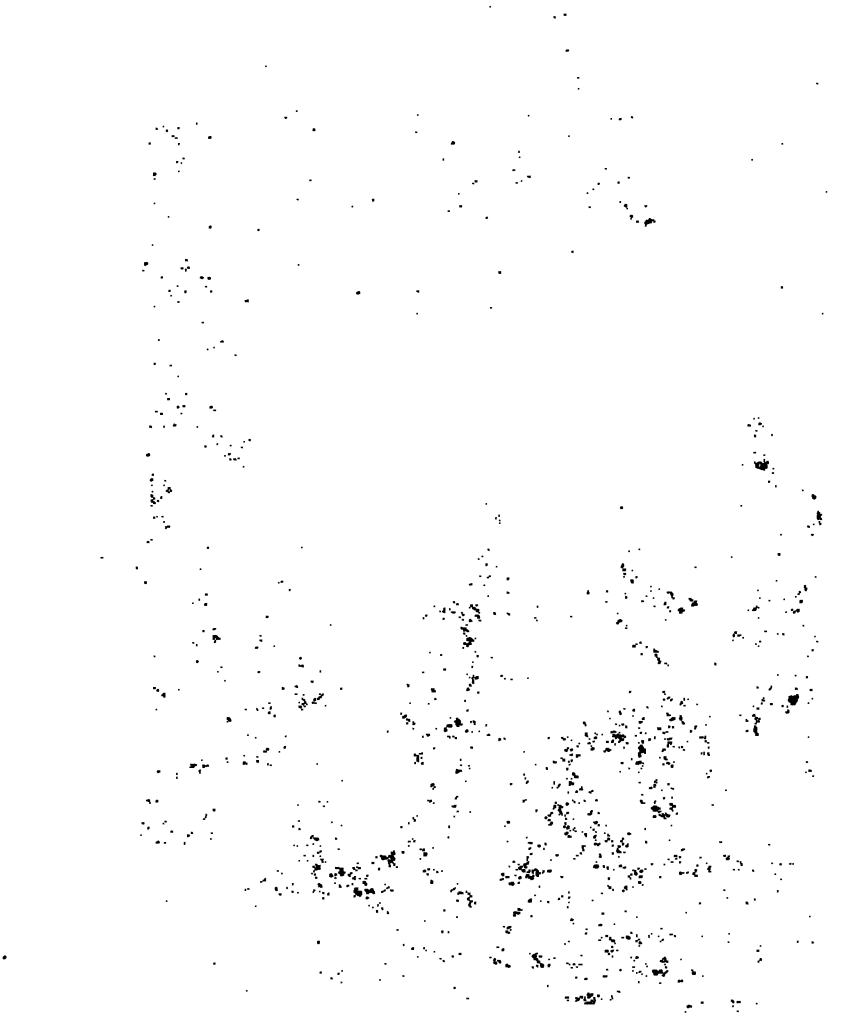

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HAYMAN BROTHERS AND LILLY,
PRINTERS,
HATTON HOUSE, FARRINGDON ROAD,
LONDON, E.C.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

'THE BAIRNS,'

GOD BLESS THEM!

IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE

ALL THE BETTER FOR IT.

J. JACKSON WRAY.

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THE FIRST HOUR.

CAPSTAN CABIN.

'WELL, my young hearties, "look alive," as the man said when he made a Guy Fawkes stuffed with straw. Draw your chairs around the fire. The fir-wood faggots blaze merrily enough. They laugh and leap and sputter as if they liked it, and every face in Capstan Cabin must fling the laughter back again in looks as bright.'

Here Uncle Charlie, as his custom was, began to hum a tune,—

'It 's good to be merry and wise,
It 's good to be honest and true.'

Whereupon rogue Harry chimed in with an impromptu couplet,—

'*For singing is better than sighs,*
And it 's bad to be looking blue.'

'Hold hard!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Don't put in your oar so readily, for fear you catch a crab.'

So, amid laughter and glee, the boys and girls of Middlethorpe Manor gathered round the cosy hearth, for this was the 'Children's Hour.'

But it is high time that I was making my young readers acquainted with the happy circle, thus unceremoniously introduced. Middlethorpe Manor was an old-fashioned country house, not very large, but all the more cosy for that. Colonel Egerton, to whom it had belonged, and his wife, had both died

while with their regiment in India, nearly three years before the time of which I speak, and their little orphan family were left to the sole guardianship of Uncle Charlie, or Captain Charles Marshall, to give him his full honours. He was a bluff, cheery soul as ever trod the deck of a ship; he had spent nearly fifty years of his life at sea, and having, as he said, 'plenty of shot in his locker,' had retired from his command, and 'laid himself up in ordinary.'

He had cast anchor in the old manor house for the sake of the lively little youngsters who called him uncle; indeed, he was as lively and, in heart, as much a youngster as any of them. Here he had found a moral and mirthful mission exactly to his taste. When the sad news of his brother and sister's death reached him, and of the arrival of the younger children from India, and of his own appointment as guardian to the orphan family, he was very much distressed, as you may guess; but Uncle Charlie had long known where to go for help and comfort, and so the good old man bent his white head by his bedside, and asking God to help him, took the solemn charge, and said, 'God helping me, I will be father and mother, both.' Three years had passed since then, and although the children could never forget the dear parents they had lost, youth and cheery Uncle Charlie had exercised their magic influence, and a brighter, happier household could not be found through all the country side.

One particular room in Middlethorpe Manor house, to which Uncle Charlie had given the name of Capstan Cabin, with its low ceiling, spanned by big oak beams, its polished wainscot, and its old-fashioned open fireplace with inviting nooks, was set apart for the special use of Uncle Charlie and the children. Captain Marshall used to call it 'The Haunted Room,' and when asked the reason for such a description, he used to say with a laugh, 'because it gets to be *so full of spirits*.' And so it did; for when the fine old sea-dog and his 'bonnie bairns' got into full swing, they made Capstan Cabin to ring with their blithesome laughter and merry glee.

But as I am not writing a story, I shall leave the good folks of Middlethorpe Manor more fully to introduce themselves,

as circumstances may permit. Enough to say, that Uncle Charlie's 'band of brigands,' to use one of his odd expressions, consisted of Harry, a bright eyed boy of thirteen, the eldest of the family; and of five others, who tapered gradually down, like the ten little niggers, in the following order:—Marion, a dark featured romp of twelve; Ida, cut pretty much after the same pattern, who had reached the mature age of eleven; Frank, a straightforward young Saxon of ten; Tom, a quiet and studious boy of nine; and Mabel, or Mab as she dubbed herself, who was the curly-headed pet of them all, and had only just celebrated her sixth birthday.

When seated by the fire on the evening before referred to, Uncle Charlie, ensconced in a low armchair by the chimney corner, was faced by Harry, who took the seat of honour on the other side. The rest filled up the semi-circle in varying order (and disorder), though Mabel always sought to recline her curly locks by her uncle's knee.

Uncle Charlie, twirling his thumbs and acting the boy, as he well knew how to do, looked innocently round the gleesome group, and said simply enough, 'We are seven.' Lifting his hand to restrain their laughter, for even Mabel recognised the apt quotation, he called aloud, as though he was on the quarter deck,—

'Overhaul the log!'

Master Harry, as chief mate, produced a green baize bag, known as 'The Budget,' which contained original articles in prose and verse, scraps and cuttings, written and gathered from time to time by each member of the 'crew.' The Budget was presented to Frank, whose turn it was to dip into its recesses. Drawing forth a folded paper, he read the following story.

BEN AND HIS BUNDLE.

'MOTHER!' said Ben Hepworth, 'there 's a boy in our school who I wish had some of my old clothes. The boys call him Shivery, because he always looks so cold; but he 's always clean, and what clothes he has are always well patched.'

'What's his name?' said his mother.

'Joe Morris. I don't think he 's got a father, but he 's a good fellow, and this weather 'll be the death of him.'

'Well,' said Ben's mother, 'if you can do anything for him, do it, and welcome.'

'Thank you, mother; if I don't take the shiver out of him before to-morrow night I 'm a Dutchman!'

Joe was not at school next day, and Ben, finding out where he lived, went to hunt him up. At length he found him living with his mother in an old block of buildings in the poorest part of the town.

'Halloa!' said Ben.

'Why, what 's brought you here?' said Shivery, much amazed.

'Why,' said Ben, I 've come to look you up.'

Joe's mother was a poor widow with four children, all of whom were sadly pinched by the bitter winter. There was scarcely a twinkle of fire in the grate, and but a handful of potatoes in a little basin on the hob. Joe had a pair of old summer trousers on, and his mother was mending his jacket with strips of flannel. That explained his absence from school.

Thank you ever so much for coming,' said Joe; 'it *is* good of you. You see, I almost froze in school yesterday; and mother didn't want me to go again till she 'd sewed me up a bit. She sews for the shop, and has to sew for us when she can. I wish 't were always summer, Ben, as it is in the tropics our geography talks about.'

'Poor Joe!' thought Ben, and bidding good day, bounded home, and stood before his mother with a glowing face.

'Mother,' said he, 'I want to make up a bundle of my clothes for Joe Morris.'

Mrs. Hepworth, glad enough to foster a spirit of kindness in her bright-faced lad, packed up a comfortable suit. Ben shouldered the bundle, and away he went, carrying in the other hand a basket of victuals for the children.

'I' ve had a good time of it, mother,' said Ben on his return. 'Joe couldn't speak, but only looked and looked, while his mother did the thanking. Joe squeezed my hand, but he

couldn't find a word to say. But, oh, mother, it was jolly to see 'em.'

* * * * * *

Twenty years passed away, and a poor fellow landed at Boston in the United States. Friendless, ill, and scarcely able to walk, he sat down on a box of goods upon the quay. There he remained for some time, when a gentleman who had been examining cargo, noticed his sickly face.

'Halloa, mate! What's the matter? No bones broke, I hope'!

The poor fellow was not able to say more than that he felt very ill and had nowhere to go.

'What's your name?' said the gentleman with a look of surprise.

'Benjamin Hepworth.'

'What! Ben! Come along then. My name's Joe Morris: and if you've forgotten me, I've not forgotten you, and never shall! Here, give me hold of you. I can carry half a dozen such

as you. My home's your home, for it 's all summer with me now, Ben Hepworth; and old Shivery 's got a debt to pay.'

Who can describe Ben's feelings? A kindly deed sown twenty years before, in the shape of a bundle of clothes, yielded an abundant harvest, in the shape of friendship, help, and hope. Thanks to his old schoolfellow, Ben Hepworth became strong and prosperous, and in the happy after time Joe Morris used to say,—

'He who shelters them that "shiver,"
Shall find that good deeds bless the giver.'

Whereupon his life-friend Ben would respond,

'Shivery found a friend who shivered,
That friend, Shivery soon delivered.'

'Ben's a brick!' said Harry sententiously, when the story ended.

'Joe's another!' said Marion, following suit.

Little Mabel with a vigorous nod of her curly head endorsed the verdict. Tom, who had a sad weakness for a pun, declared that he had never heard a better tune from a '*ben-joe*' in all his life.

Uncle Charlie, shocked at the awful perpetration, inflicted a penalty on the spot, and fined him an original poem, to be presented on the following night. Then opening the big old-fashioned Bible, which was always ready to hand, he read,—

'*Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.*'

It was now Harry's turn with the Budget, and probably knowing by 'the feel of it' that he had got what he wanted, he drew out an original charade.

AWAY went Harry, away went Ned,
Away into coppice and wood;
Old gardener Jeremy saw them, and said,
'I'll warrant they're after no good.'

'Away went Harry, away went Ned;
'We 'll find it! We 'll find it!' they cried;
And by-and-by Harry with energy said,
My *first!* for my *second* he spied.

Away went Harry, away went Ned,
And carried the prize they had found;
Old gardener Jeremy saw them and said,
'You are not my *whole*, I 'll be bound.'

Away goes Harry, away goes Ned,
And show to their mother the prize;
And she, with a serious shake of the head,
Their right to my *second* denies.

Then Harry was sorry, and so was Ned;
My *first* they both uttered twice o'er;
And back to the coppice they rapidly sped,
And my second they placed as before.

Then back came Harry, and back came Ned,
With eyes that were merry and bright;
'Aye, *now* you're my *whole*,' old Jeremy said;
And gardener Jerry was right.

'Mother!' said Harry, and, 'Mother!' said Ned,
'We've carried back all that we stole;'
She listened with pleasure, and smilingly said,
'My boys must be ever my *whole*.'

'Very well spliced,' said Uncle Charlie; 'that's a knot that would be hard to loosen in a gale of wind. To-morrow night we shall see who has found the answer to Harry's riddle.'

Now the Budget was handed to little Mabel, who drew forth a tiny paper suited to her tiny fingers, and this is what she found:—

TRUST AND REST.

CHRIST is our Saviour, saves us from sin;
Trust in His love, then joy you shall win.

The best way of any, don't think it odd,
To be happy when young is trusting in God.
Trusting is resting; we rest on Another,
As baby asleep on the lap of its mother.
Sin makes us weary, we long for a rest;
The best place of any is Jesus's breast.
'Believe and be saved!' That's what He saith;
Believing is trusting, and trusting is faith.
Trusting and resting, believing alway,
Resting on Jesus for ever and aye!
Of all ways to be happy, this, this is the best,
Then come to the Saviour, He giveth us rest.

Mabel had read the lines in her clear, sweet, childish voice, and the quiet influence of her simple words brought an impressive, 'Thank you, Mabel,' from everybody, and which came straight from the heart. Uncle Charlie, who saw that the little poem had made its own mark, quietly said,—

'Yes. The Saviour said so;'

"*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls.*"

The evening hymn was sung. Uncle Charlie, according to custom, offered an evening prayer; then the children's hour was over, and the minor mortals of Middlethorpe Manor bade Uncle Charlie 'good night.'

THE SECOND HOUR.

THE WOUNDED LINNET.

'A captain went a-sailing,
All on the deep blue sea !'

THAT 'S what Uncle Charlie was humming as he was cruising round the garden. He had just rounded Cape Holly, and was tacking nor-nor-east to make the harbour of Manor Porch. He did not see a couple of tight little yachts in the shape of Ida and Marion, who were quietly sailing before the wind; and so, bearing down on them at the rate of three knots an hour, he ran right athwart their bows, humming:

'A captain went a-sailing,
All on the deep blue sea;——'

'*And he couldn't help a-running,*
Over Ida and me!'

sung Marion, as well as she could for laughing.

'Jib your boom!' shouted Uncle Charlie, 'or I'll send your cockle-shells to Davy Jones. Why don't you carry signals, you young pirates?'

'Because that would be a "signal" for the prize to sheer off; but now we 've caught you.'

Seizing him on either hand, the captive cruiser was taken in tow, and in a few minutes was safely moored in Capstan Cove, close by the beacon, which was merrily blazing in the old-fashioned grate, and lent a mellow glow to the cheery faces of the gathered youngsters of Middlethorpe Manor.

'Uncle Charlie,' said little Mabel, 'Frank 's got a linnet in the saddle-house.'

'A linnet?' said the old sea captain, with a serious face. 'That 's not contraband of war. It 's an unlawful capture.'

'But the poor bird was hurt,' said Curly-locks, 'and the poor little thing was fluttering on the ground. Frank took it up, and petted it, and tried to make it fly, but it couldn't. So he 's made a nest for it in the saddle-house, and he gave it some crumbs and some water, and he says, when it gets better it shall fly away

'Prisoner at the bar!' said Uncle Charlie, 'give us a grip of your hand! That 's right, middy. You 've put the poor little craft in dock for repairs, and as soon as she 's all a-taut and ship-shape, off she goes! I 'm an ancient mariner, and the poet Coleridge mentions another "old salt," who had something to do with a bird. Can anybody repeat the last verse?'

Studious Tom and Marion, who was a bit of a blue-stocking, were both equal to the occasion, and so the latter quoted the golden lines that everybody ought to have by heart:

'He liveth well, who loveth well
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

'Right!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Now for your poem, Master Tom. "Pay it out," as the butcher said when he brought his bill.'

Whereupon Tom paid the following fine for punning.

A RING FOR THE NOBLEST.

A FATHER had three hopeful boys,
And sought in every way he could
To make them wise, to fix their choice
On all things lovely, pure, and good.

'God bless my boys! I love them all;
I 'd make them happy if I could.

And happiness,' said he, 'will fall
To those who practise "doing good."

'I have a ring, and it I 'll give
To him who shall the noblest be;
Who, pure religion best shall *live*,
And show a mind from self set free.'

A month had passed, and once again
The father called his children round.
Which of them will the ring obtain?
Which of them is the noblest found?

'Well, my first-born, what is your claim?'
'The money found, I did restore.'
'Then you have earned an honest name,
And done your duty; nothing more.'

'My second son, what is your plea?'
'I risked my life to save another.'
'A noble action, worthy thee;
But man should do it for his brother.'

My youngest child, what have you done?
'My greatest enemy I fed.'
'Then Christ in my own child I see;
The ring is thine,' the father said.

A hearty round of cheers greeted Tom, as he blushingly took his seat, and Uncle Charlie said,—

'A well spun yarn, Tom. Good hemp, well twisted. It's love that makes the world go round, we may depend on it; and the more of that the merrier.'

'I think the others ought to have had littler rings,' said Mabel; 'they were good boys.'

'Avast there!' said Uncle Charlie. 'We don't pay a man for not being a rogue, Queen Mab; and Tom wouldn't like to be paid for diving under the lee scuppers and fetching up a drowning cabin boy. He would hoist the signal, "part company,' and sheer off indignant. Nelson said, "England expects every man to do his duty," and I say that God and man expect it too.

It 's true that the third youth did his duty, but it 's so uncommon and so little the fashion to do that sort of thing, that I 'm glad he got the ring, and I hope it was as thick as a hawser, with a diamond in it as big as a bullet. But whether or no, he was just a jewel in himself, such as God is going one day to "number up," when all hands are piped up, either for punishment or prize money.'

Then reaching the big Bible, always by his side, he read,—

'*If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

'It 's about the hardest lesson to learn that I know of,' said he, putting the book in its place; and I don't know anybody that can teach it rightly but Him who said,—

'*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*'

There was a short and thoughtful pause, and Uncle Charlie was glad to find that the lesson was not likely to be lost.

'Now then,' said Uncle Charlie, 'who 's got his knife into Harry's oyster. I fancy that riddle of his wasn't all plain sailing. To me, it has been just like navigating among shoals and quicksands in a thick fog, on a dark night, with the binnacle lamp blown out, or like a blind man groping in a cellar at midnight, with a farthing candle in his lantern, which he has forgotten to light.'

Amid the loud laughter which followed this description of darkness visible, Ida unfolded a small paper, and Uncle Charlie said,—

'*Ida, I'd a idea* that you would guess it.'

'Oh, oh!' was shouted in common chorus; 'Uncle Charlie 's made a pun, two puns. Let us fine him a story for to-morrow night.'

Uncle Charlie hung his head like a convicted criminal, and promised to pay the penalty. Then Ida read her answer to Harry's charade.

My dear Uncle Charlie,
I 've found the riddle out!
The boys said *Ho!* and stole a *nest*,
So they were thieves no doubt.

But when they ran so readily,
And to the coppice came,
And put the nest back in its place,
They won an *honest* name.

And I would join with their mamma,
To wish them strong and clever;
But ten times more that they may be
Honest and good for ever!

Everybody was saying how well Ida's key fitted Harry's lock, when Uncle Charlie bawled aloud in his quarter-deck voice, 'Overhaul the log!' Straightway the Budget was presented to merry Maid Marion, who read the following story.

THE BEACON FIRE.

WIDOW GRANT lived in a hollow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in Virginia. It was a wild and lonely place, but the railway found it out, as it finds every other place, and began to wind its way, with its great engines and trucks and carriages, among the hills and ravines of that mountainous region. The poor woman had a small cabin and a few acres of land. These she cultivated herself, with the aid of her three little girls, who were all loving, honest, and handy. In the summer time they picked berries of various kinds, and walked three miles to the nearest railway station to sell them or to send them on to the nearest market.

Now one of the conductors on the road often met the three girls, tugging away, tired and weary with their heavy baskets on their heads, and being a kind and amiable man, he spoke to them pleasantly, and not seldom, pitying their tired limbs, would take them on his cars and set them down near their own cabin door. Of course such a thing as a ride on the rail was a great treat, but the conductor's unvarying kindness to them was a greater still. The good mother heard their praises as they spoke of him, until she, as was very natural, was as grateful and as pleased as they were.

Sometimes the children picked a basketful of ripe berries on

purpose for him, and sometimes the mother sent him a little fruit out of her own garden. He showed his good taste and good feeling by taking the gifts, though he always managed, somehow, to give them something in return. So matters went on for some time, and the conductor was regarded quite as an old friend, though the poor widow had never even seen him.

The winter of 1854 was very cold in that part of Virginia, and the snow was nearly three feet deep even on the mountains. One night it suddenly became very warm, the snows rapidly melted, and at the same time there came down torrents of rain, so that the valleys were almost filled with water. The night was pitch dark, and the train, as usual, was winding its way along the mountain slopes and across the gorges, and the conductor was in his place in the car, quite unconcerned, because he knew that the railway was laid all along upon solid rock.

At midnight, amid the dash of the rain and the roar of the mountain streams, he heard a sharp whistle from the engine. He sprang to the brakes, and the wheels skidded on the iron plates amid the flashing sparks they made, and in a little while the train was stopped. The conductor seized his lantern, and made his way in front, where he saw a sight such as he will never, never forget if he live for a hundred years. A large, bright fire of pine logs was burning right upon the track, flashing its light along the gleaming rails, and then showing an awful gulf! A huge gap had been rent in the mountain by the tremendous rush of melted snow, and it seemed to the wondering guard as he gazed down the awful abyss as though eternity itself was spread before him. A few minutes more, and death and destruction would have come to him and all the precious lives the cars contained!

There by the pine fire stood Widow Grant and her three children, wet to the skin, and their meagre garments and loosened hair tossed by the wind and rain. As soon as the girls saw the conductor they ran and clasped his knees, and sobbing with joy, the eldest said,

'O, Mr. Sharland, thank God we stopped you in time!'

Then the dear mother stepped forward and took his hand, saying,—

'O, Sir, I would have lost my life before one hair of your head should have been hurt! O, how I prayed that we might stop the train! My God, I thank thee!'

You see, Widow Grant and her children had heard the awful sound of the falling rock, which shook the ground like an earthquake. She felt sure that it had torn the railway down, and nothing would do but she must go and see. Then straw and logs were carried by herself and her three little maidens,

to make a fire which should warn of danger. So they toiled and trembled, and prayed that they might save their friend. The conductor fell upon his knees, and thanked God for the wonderful deliverance, and called for blessings on the poor widow and her children. The engineer, firemen, and brakemen, stood by with tears streaming down their weather-beaten cheeks. When the conductor told the passengers of their marvellous escape, they seemed as though they could not do

enough for the courageous woman and her brave little girls; more than a hundred pounds was collected for the widow on the spot. Afterwards the railway company built her a new house near the railway, and gave her and her children a life pass over the road. 'So you see,' said the conductor, who tells the story, 'a little kindness, which cost me nothing, saved my life and my train from destruction.'

The young folks sighed their relief from the excitement of the story, and Uncle Charlie said,—

'Yes, bairns; kind words waken kind echoes. Kind deeds, like an outward bound merchant-man, bring back tons of treasure on the homeward voyage. He who gives kindness meets with it. But it is nearly time to swing your hammocks.'

Good nights were interchanged, the 'chats' suspended, and Capstan Cabin was soon emptied of its guests.

THE THIRD HOUR.

BLACK BO'S'UN.

UNCLE CHARLIE had a negro servant, a tall, intelligent looking fellow of four and twenty, who was the very pink of good humour, and whose devotion to his master was something wonderful to see. At the sound of the bluff Captain's cheery voice, Bo's'un, as he had dubbed the negro (boatswain that is in salt-water language), was all eye and ear, and his quick, 'Iss, massa,' was followed by a cheerful obedience, which was evidently more for love than money. Middleton Manor House and its surroundings were all invested with a robe of white, and still the snow was descending in large, fast-falling flakes. Frank and Marion were at open war; exchanging broadsides in the shape of snowballs, in which each of them was getting well *powdered*, and both of them received a fair supply of *shot*, while loud *explosions* of laughter showed that the *ball-practice* was without fatal effect.

Bo's'un, who was just returning from the village post-office with the family letter-bag, was mightily tickled at the sight of the fearful fray. His dusky face was all aglow with delight, and peals of laughter came, loud and long, from between the two rows of spotless ivory, which showed a striking contrast to the ebony of his skin.

'Golly! Missee Marion, dat a good shot! Ha! ha! Massa Frank! you get peppered too much!' which showed that

Bo's'un's sympathies were all on the side of the 'weaker vessel.' Pausing a moment in their strife Marion said,—

'Can you make a snowball, Bo's'un?'

'No, no,' said the Captain's trusty henchman, shivering. 'No, no, Missee. Snow very bad. It burn 'he fingers.' He rubbed his hands at the bare idea of it, and took himself off to complete his errands.

'Bo's'un!' cried the quarter-deck voice of Uncle Charlie.

'Aye, aye, massa.'

'Pipe all hands to Capstan Cabin.'

In a few minutes the eager juveniles had taken possession of their customary quarters, and every eye was turned to Uncle Charlie, waiting for the promised 'yarn.'

'Now, uncle,' said little Mabel, 'you must begin with "Once upon a time." All the best stories start in that way.'

'Aye, aye,' was the willing answer, as uncle laid his hand lovingly on her curly locks. 'I'll splice it on, Queen Mab,' as the man said when he bought his wooden leg.' And there, in the red firelight, Uncle Charlie narrated the following story.

THE SLAVE AND THE SHARK.

ONCE upon a time, a merchant vessel was laid at anchor in the harbour of St. Eustace, an island in the West Indies. She had brought a cargo of goods manufactured at Manchester and Birmingham, had received a freight of sugar and coffee, of ginger and other spices, and was now ready to weigh anchor and to proceed on her homeward voyage. It was a beautiful spot; the blue waters of the bay flashed back the brightness of an unclouded sun; the lofty hills, sloping downward to the sea, were clothed with a wealth of tropical timber, such as logwood and mahogany, as also with tall and elegant palm trees, the graceful plantain, and the broad banana. Plantations of coffee-plants and sugar-cane gave variety to the landscape, while the valleys and mountain gorges were bright with the splendour of the gayest flowers. The small seaport, with its neat, white houses of painted timber, whose verandahs were adorned with the creepers,

climbers, and flowering plants peculiar to the climate, were interspersed with the rude but picturesque huts of the negroes, and all combined to form a picture of unusual beauty. It was a place,—

> 'Where every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile;'

for these were the days of slavery, and the island of St. Eustace, not being British territory, was still the land of cruelty and bondage.

The good ship *Triton*, as I have said, was ready for her homeward trip, and the captain was just about to give orders to weigh anchor, when the report of a pistol was heard, followed by a scream of pain. The attention of all the sailors on deck was instantly directed to the shore, and a very exciting scene met their view. A negro lad, about sixteen years of age, was running under the shadow of the mangrove trees towards a little creek which intervened between him and the town. A short distance behind him there followed a white man on a small mountain pony. His suit of striped linen, and his broad straw hat, denoted either the owner or the overseer of a plantation. He was urging his pony to its utmost speed, and the crew on board the *Triton* could hear his commands, mingled with oaths and curses, as he called upon the fugitive to stop. The slave, however, though almost exhausted, struggled hard, and at length leaped into the creek, and struck boldly out for the ship on which the English flag was flying on the breeze. His sudden dip into the clear, cold water, added new vigour to his tired limbs, and he speedily covered half the distance between the shore and the haven of freedom, which he sought to win. He evidently knew that the deck of the British ship, like British ground could only be trodden by the free!

The whole ship's crew, including the old negro cook, were standing at the vessel's side, watching with great excitement the lad's bold dash for liberty.

'Well done, Sambo!' 'Cheer up, messmate!' 'Hurrah, young'un!' and similar exclamations broke from the lips of the eager tars, and the negro cook quivered from head to foot with

anxiety for his dusky brother. His eyes flashed, as with outstretched hands he leaned over the bulwarks and shouted,—

'Come 'long, boss! dat 's de way to do it! an' dis is de spot for you.' Meanwhile, the pursuer, by the aid of his fleet and willing steed, had reached the little quay, and obtaining instant aid, continued the chase in a boat. The hirelings pulled with a will, and speedily gained on the now exhausted negro, who was yet some distance from that land of Canaan, the shadow of the English flag.

A loud cry suddenly broke from the lips of the terrified cook.

'A shark! a shark!' he shouted, as he pointed to a dark object in the water, swiftly approaching the spot where the hapless slave was struggling for dear life. A cry of horror broke from every eager watcher, and the captain, whose enthusiastic interest had held him speechless, stripped off his jacket, and seizing a large knife from the hands of the cook, who had brought it from the caboose on the first alarm, plunged into the sea and struck boldly out to do battle with the finny monster, that the poor runaway might accomplish his escape.

It was a foolish thing to do, and the chances were all against him; but he had inherited the impulsive blood of the stout Norsemen of north-eastern England, and with more courage than caution he threw himself into the very jaws of death. The shark was compelled to turn its attention from its purposed victim, and showing its treble row of sharp, serrated teeth approached with open mouth to wreak its vengeance on the captain. At the very moment when the rescued slave was being hauled up the vessel's side, Black Pompey, the cook, seized with a sudden inspiration, ran to the caboose, fetched an enormous leg of fresh pork, and flung the dainty dish into the sea between the now repentant captain and the shark. The former understood the ruse in a moment, and just as the monster turned up his white belly to seize the nearest prize, the captain swiftly turned, and reached the boat which had been lowered to aid him at the same time that the slave-hunter and his crew floated beneath the *Triton's* bows.

No sooner was the headstrong skipper safe on deck again,

than the rejoicing crew waved their caps, and sent up a true British cheer, which made the welkin ring. There stood the captain, dripping with the salt water bath, which had cooled his excited blood, the centre of an admiring crowd; at his

feet knelt the poor fugitive, panting and exhausted, with the blood oozing from a flesh wound in his arm, made by his pursuer's pistol bullet; and before him stood the wrathful

owner, with angry and determined mien, waiting to claim his living chattel and bear him back again to bondage.

'O, Massa Captain!' said the negro, 'you no send me back! Him kill me! Buckra man steal me, whip me, kill me!' And again, clasping the captain's knees, he implored mercy and protection.

'Wall,' said the slave-hunter, who was evidently an importation from the States, 'I guess it's about time this bit o' play was finished. Come, you black rascal!' and here he laid his hands on the trembling negro.

In one moment the captain laid his strong hand on *him.*

'Avast there, you land-lubber!' said he, giving him a push that sent him reeling over the deck. Poor Quashy is under my protection, and the King of England's! All the world and his wife shan't touch him while that flag floats over him, this deck stands under him, and my name 's Charlie Hold-him-fast!'

The gleam of joy which passed over the negro's face, the scowl of baffled and vindictive hate which lowered over the features of the defeated owner, the fire of resolve which shot from the captain's eyes, and the glow of satisfaction imprinted on the faces of the delighted tars, made a scene never to be forgotten. The crestfallen tyrant was ordered out of the ship, and Black Pompey, in the ecstasy of victory, gave him a parting shot as his boat glided off from beneath the *Triton's* bows.

'Dere, you big, white rascal, I 've a good mind to set the shark on ye, on'y one shark won't eat anudder. I would like for swop yer for dat leg o' pork, an' would gib massa shark onion trimmings into de bargain! Yah! yah! yah!'

The jolly tars now weighed anchor with a will, and the good ship *Triton* was soon bounding over the billows, as if it knew that it bore on board the bounding heart of the rescued victim who was no more a slave.

The captain and his crew treated the negro lad with great kindness, and Black Pompey, who had picked up a smattering of education, turned the caboose into a school, and instructed him in the rudiments of cooking and reading. Quaco, as the negro was called, attached himself in deepest love and gratitude

to his deliverer. He was docile, intelligent, and handy; and the captain, who sought to do his duty as a Christian man, made Quaco acquainted with the blessed gospel of that Saviour who gives a greater freedom, the freedom of the soul from sin. The bonds thus knit between the rescuer and the rescued continued, to my knowledge, for many years, and, if they are both living, doubtless continue to this day.'

A sigh of relief broke the eager stillness with which Uncle Charlie's exciting story had been listened to by his youthful hearers, and then for a few brief moments silence reigned in Capstan Cabin. Seizing the poker, Uncle Charlie broke up the coals, turned the burning logs in such a fashion as to produce a clear, bright flame, which filled the room with its radiant glow, and then made a preconcerted signal by dropping the poker on the hearth. A tap was heard at the door.

'Come in!' said Uncle Charlie, and Bo's'un, his features lighted up with a conscious grin of gladness, stood within the room. All eyes were turned towards the unusual intruder.

'Bo's'un,' said Uncle Charlie, 'what's your name?'

'Quaco, Massa Cap'un.'

'Where do you come from?'

'St. Eustace, Massa Cap'un.'

'What vessel did you sail in?'

'De good ship *Triton*, Massa Cap'un,' and here Quaco's eyes began to fill with tears.

'Who was the commander?'

'Cap'un Charles Marshall; God bless him for ever and ever!' blurted out Bo's'un, rushing from the room.

'O, uncle! *dear* uncle!' was raised in chorus. The girls, whose tender hearts, God bless them! were all alive with sympathy, half smothered the grand old man with kisses. The warm-hearted lads were not slow to follow suit, and in their glistening eyes, heightened colour, and unmeasured praises, Uncle Charlie had full reward for paying the penalty of his pun with the story of the slave and the shark.

The revelation which followed Uncle Charlie's narrative was followed by a thoughtful pause. Then as usual, the old man brought forth the big Bible and read:

'*He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

'Our time is gone,' said Uncle Charlie; 'but I should like to sing a verse or two of James Montgomery's beautiful hymn on the seventy-second psalm.

Ida took her place at the piano, and their sweet young voices mingled with Uncle Charlie's tenor as they sang the praises of the great Liberator who came from heaven to gain deliverance for the captive, and to bid the oppressed go free.

Hail to the Lord's anointed!
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!

He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

He comes with succour speedy
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong:

To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in His sight.

There was a very wondrous influence attending Uncle Charlie's prayer that night as he praised God for liberty and Gospel light, and pleaded for the speedy coming of the time,—

When man shall own no master,
From the equator to the pole,
But the dear Christ that loveth us
And the God that made us all.

Once more our young friends bade good night to their fine old friend and guardian, and once more the failing flame from cinder and pine log flickered silently in an empty room.

THE FOURTH HOUR.

THE CRUISE.

'SHIP ahoy! ahoy! Heave to, and show your colours!' shouted Uncle Charlie, with his hands to his mouth for a speaking trumpet. The orders rang out through the clear, crisp, frosty air, and brought up two dainty looking craft, which had long been scudding under a weight of canvas. Again the speaking trumpet was lifted to the captain's lips:

'Name your vessel!'

'Maid Marion,' was the answer from the taller craft.

'Who 's your consort?'

'The Fairy Mabel!' said the youthful skipper of the bark in question, with a merry laugh.

'Whither bound?'

'Port of Middlethorpe!'

'What 's your cargo?'

'Tea from China, sugar from the West Indies, silver from Peru, and flannel goods from Yorkshire.'

'China, Peru, West Indies, and Yorkshire. That 's a long voyage for such a couple of cockle shells, and beats Puck into fits; for though he could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes, he had neither to carry cargo nor to put into port,' said Uncle Charlie as he hove alongside and took them in tow. 'I'm glad to find that you 've such an honest freight on board, and the old ship Captain Charlie will gladly sail in company. A voyage for gain may end in loss; a voyage of discovery may end

in disappointment; a voyage for pleasure may be cut short by a wreck: but a voyage of mercy is sure of a fair wind and good anchorage. Who is your cargo consigned to?'

'To Widow Wetherill and Sailor Jack,' said Marion.

It was the middle of a bright December afternoon, and our three cruisers, seasonably equipped, marched along with brisk and buoyant step, all the brisker because they bore a blessing as they went. They soon gained the entrance to the picturesque village of Middlethorpe Major, so called because there was

another and a 'minor' Middlethorpe near by. It was a cosy little hamlet, and was separated from its lesser namesake by a considerable stretch of hill and moorland, wood and water, known as the Branksome Forest.

Under the shadow of the little village church, whose ivy-clad steeple peeped above the lime trees which adorned the little churchyard, was a row of cottages, the roofs of which were thatched and moss covered, and whose diamond-paned windows and gothic porches helped to form a gem of rural beauty, which it did the eyes good to look upon. In two of those neat but lowly nests dwelt Widow Wetherill and Sailor Jack, who was a

weather-worn old salt, with one arm. The absence of the other arm was more than partially compensated for by a leather substitute, to which was affixed an iron hook. The way in which 'Sailor Jack,' as the villagers called him, used that hook to serve all sorts of purposes, from morning till night, was a standing source of wonder and amusement. It was a fork at his dinner table, a hoe in his garden, a bodkin when he did a little amateur tailoring for his own behoof; and he used to boast that he could do everything with it but shave himself or write a letter. The reason why he could not manage the latter feat, however, was very likely to be an inability to write at all, owing to defective education. In which case, of course, it is hardly likely that even Jack's magic hook could give him much assistance.

The welcome little cargo from foreign parts was partially unladed at Widow Wetherill's, and it was evident by the way the bright-looking old woman in the widow's cap received the gift, that this was no unusual visit, and that she had a very warm place in her heart for both the young and the old of Middlethorpe Manor.

'Well, mother,' said Uncle Charlie, by way of salutation, 'what 's the best news to-day?'

'The best news, Captain Charlie, for every day is God's goodness and the love of Christ,' said the widow; 'and that news is greater than I can tell.'

'Aye, aye, Jane, that 's "a story to be continued," and every day adds a new chapter. It 's grand for us when we can read it with a thankful heart. When have you heard from your son?'

Widow Wetherill's son Dick had gone to Australia and other places to 'seek his fortune' as he said; but he was a 'rolling stone,' and as yet had not gathered much moss. He was a light-hearted, good-tempered fellow enough, but had no stability of character, and for that reason didn't make much out. He was fond of change, of travel and adventure, and could talk of what he had seen and done in a very racy, interesting, and amusing way, as we may hear some time, perhaps. Of course, Widow Wetherill thought her son to be all that heart could wish, for he certainly was good to her as far as his wandering life would allow.

'I haven't heard for a few months where he is, but I have a letter that he wrote from Marryfat,—no Ballygat; dear, dear! I never can remember them outlandish names. Here it is, Captain Charlie.'

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND.

Uncle Charlie donned his spectacles, sat on the edge of the little deal table under the window, and read as follows:

'DEAR MOTHER,—"Here we are again," as the clown says in the pantomime. No, that won't do, either, because I am here by myself; and yet when you read this letter, it will bring us together, won't it? Yes, but then, in that case, it'll be "*there* we are," eh? I think I'll cross it out; only if I do, I shall have to cross it all out, and however shall I begin again? You will see from this that I have found my way to New Zealand, and perhaps you will be surprised to hear that I am full of *new zeal and*— and hope to do something here worth mentioning.

'Do you know, mother mine, that I am now directly underneath you? You are on the top side of the world, and I am on the bottom side. Nay, that can't be it either, because the sky is overhead here as well, and I have to look up to see it. Still, they do say that if a hole was cut right through to the other side of the world it would come out right in the middle of old England! What would you think if I were to come suddenly popping up from under the kitchen floor? *Up?* no not "up," it's *down*, you know, from here; and yet I can't make it out. O, I see, I should drop down to the middle of the world, and then there would be *two ups*, one either way, and I could manage neither. No, thank you, I'll stay where I am. There! I hear you saying, "I wish he would; but he never stops anywhere."

'Never mind, good mother, I'm hale and hearty. I enjoy life like a swallow in June, and, like it, I go somewhere else for January. I've sent you some money by the captain of the *Conquering Hero*, and I love you dearly. So all will come right, by-and-by.

'You know that I have gone up and down the world a good deal. Well, at any rate, I 've gone down, and now that I 'm just beneath you, I can't go "*downer*," can I? Of all the countries that I have seen, this caps all! Why, if you lived here, you wouldn't know what rheumatism meant. As for consumption, it 's as scarce an article as soap in a gipsy's tent or vinegar in a cask of sugar. All you 've got to do is to tickle up the ground a bit just for fun, and up grows everything, "wholesale, retail, and for exportation."

'The natives are called Maoris; a fine set of fellows, of the colour of copper. But I wish they wouldn't make such "pickles" of themselves. They tattoo their bodies, by making little holes in the skin with a knife, and dropping some sort of dye into them. If they did it to me, I think I should die, and one hole would be quite enough for me, then. They make themselves look as ugly as an African god in a bad attack of smallpox. I saw a fellow the other day who was scribbled all over with bad writing, like a schoolboy's first copy-book. He looked for all the world as if he had been swimming through an acre of bramble bushes, with his clothes off. They say they do it to make their enemies afraid of them, and, richest joke of all, to make the women love them. Well, tastes differ; but if I was a woman, I would as soon marry a scarecrow, with his coat unbrushed. Last week I was down south, and had a look at the geysers. They are big volcanoes of hot water, and would boil all the "praties" in Ireland, only Paddy the cook would be very likely to get boiled too. There are no wild animals here, except men, and the missionaries are taming them one after the other until the breed seems to be dying out. The Maoris used to eat men, but now they are ashamed of it, and go in for more reasonable diet. I must now come to a stop. There, I hear you saying, "I wish he would, and not go rambling about like the wandering Jew." Never mind, mother, I 'm coming to Middlethorpe by-and-by. God bless you! So no more at present from

'Your affectionate Scapegrace,

'DICK.'

Both the reader and the youthful listeners were much amused by Dick Wetherill's humorous letter. Bidding the old lady good morning, and leaving the acceptable gifts with which they had been laden, they passed on to the little cottage which was the 'cabin,' as the owner called it, of Sailor Jack.

'Hallo, messmate! How 's the weather?' said Uncle Charlie to the ancient mariner, who touched his forelock with his hook by way of greeting.

'All's fair to wind 'ard, captain. I 'd a bit o' dirty weather with the rheumatiz; but it 's blown to leeward, thank God! and the squall 's past.'

The remainder of the freight was transferred to the consignee, who having seized the packet of tea with his left hand, deftly inserted his polished hook under the strings of the sugar parcel and landed both on the quay of his little deal table, which was as white as a clean plank scoured down with holy-stone.

'Thank you, ladies,' said Sailor Jack. 'My bunker 's full, an' my heart 's full; and to see your bonny faces in my little cabin is like a rift o' blue sky an' a glint o' sunshine in a Newfoundland fog.'

Here Miss Mabel, who had also a silver gift for the old tar, dropped the half crown, which went rolling across the sanded floor. While they were seeking the vagrant coin, Sailor Jack cried suddenly:

'Here it is, the vagabond!' and stretching his magic hook, cleverly jerked it on his shoe; from thence, with a second jerk, he landed it upon the palm of his less useful hand, and amid the laughter of the merry girls put it in his pocket, saying as he touched his locks again:

'Bless your heart, Miss Mabel! and thank 'ee; though I 'd rather see a whole crown on your head than half-a-crown in my hand any day. And, for that matter,' said he reverently, for the worthy sailor was learned in the highest lore, however simple in all others,—'I shall see it some day, if we be true to the great Captain, and reach the harbour of the New Jerusalem.'

Through the gathering shades of evening Uncle Charlie and his young companions returned to Middlethorpe Manor.

The evening hour in Capstan Cabin was enlivened by the story of their voyage, and the cosy glow which lighted up the room, flickered on the wainscot, and gleamed along the old oak beams above, was made all the brighter by the reflected light of the kindly deeds which had been kindly done. After the whole story of their visit had been related and discussed, the time for separation drew near, but Master Tom produced a folded paper from his pocket. Being observed by Uncle Charlie, that kindly owner of the white head and youthful heart said,—

'Read your despatch to the crew, Tom. Is it promotion or prize money?'

'Neither,' said Tom, with a modest blush. 'It is a charade, which I have "made out of my own head;" and if agreeable to the honourable crew of Capstan Cabin, I will——'

'Hark away, Tom! The fox will be out of the covert, down the hill, over the river, and through the wood before you get to the meet, if you don't mind. Hark away!'

Without more ado, Master Tom propounded the following original charade, merely premising it with the hope that some one would favour them with an answer on the following evening.

JONATHAN GILES.

'A FOOLISH old farmer was Jonathan Giles,
And he rode on a market day
To Oxbury town, some seventeen miles,
And passed through *my first* on his way.

He 'd a sharp eye to business had Jonathan Giles,
And was bent upon getting *my next;*
He got it at last, by his cunning and wiles,
From a seller whose wits were perplexed.

He carried his purchase from Oxbury town,
And hastened him back to his farm;
As he passed through *my first,* his pony fell down,
And painfully shattered his arm.

It served him quite right, for his cheating that day,
Though *my whole* had made Jonathan glad;
He called *my whole* good, till he fell on his way,
And then it was proved to be bad.

Be honest! For he who by falsehood and wiles
My *second* obtains from his brother;
Though he wins in one fashion, like Jonathan Giles,
Is as certain to lose in another.

The plaudits that greeted Master Tom's production were of a very hearty character.

'There!' said Uncle Charlie; 'hook that dolphin, and bring him into Capstan Cabin to-morrow evening, and we'll study his colours by firelight. Good night, my beauties, and may God bless you.'

Once more the 'chats with Uncle Charlie' were suspended, and our youthful friends retired to rest.

THE FIFTH HOUR.

THE CAPTIVE SQUIRREL.

'I 'm bound for the kingdom,
And half my journey's done;
And still the good ship *Gospel*
Goes merrily sailing on.'

THE singer was Sailor Jack, who was posting away at a rapid rate on the road to Middlethorpe Manor; beating time as he went with his hooked arm, and rolling out his ditty in a way which said much for his lungs and more for his spirits, which were as buoyant as a schooner short of ballast and without a cargo in half a gale of wind.

'O, she 's a goodly vessel,
And trim from stern to stem;
And she'll bear me safe to harbour,
In the New Jerusa*lem*.'

'Hallo, messmate!' said Uncle Charlie, who was standing by the gate which led into the grounds of the old Manor House, 'furl your sails, and tack to leeward;' and hereupon Uncle Charlie stood aside to let him pass.

'Aye, aye, your honour! This is my port this afternoon. I 've brought a present for Miss Mabel.'

Lifting up a small wooden box, which he carried in his hand, with several holes cut through the lid, he showed Uncle Charlie a young squirrel which he had caught under the beech trees in

Branksome Wood. The little captive was peeping through the air holes with a wistful and timorous look, and its little heart was beating with a force that kept its breast in constant motion. Uncle Charlie's face clouded over, and his honest brow assumed a frown; for he hated slavery, and had a heart so tender that he had been known to wipe away a furtive tear while reading Sterne's story of the caged starling.

'Jack Harrison,' said he, 'you are a pirate! You ought to be made to walk the plank or to be hung at the yard-arm. That squirrel has as much right to God's free air and sunshine as either you or I. I heard you singing just now about being bound for the New Jerusalem; but I'll tell you what, Sailor Jack, you are not likely to get there if you carry such a cargo as that on board.'

'Nay, your honour; I meant no harm to the poor little beast; and I'm thinking that Miss Mabel will be glad of it, and 'll treat it as kindly as its own mother would. But I'll open his cabin door if you like, and give him his sailing orders.'

'No, no,' said Uncle Charlie, after a pause. 'Take it to Queen Mab, and let us hear what royalty has to say about it.'

Away went Sailor Jack, but somehow or other he had lapsed into silence. His hook, which we saw just now waving in the air, hung as limp as an empty sleeve; the wooden cage had grown to weigh a heavy hundredweight, and his song was stifled into silence. Looking first at the house and then back at Uncle Charlie, Jack sighed, and said to himself,—

'I wish I was out on the high seas, with a good hundred miles between me and the shore.' Then, looking at his captive, he said,—

'You young nut-cracker! I'd willingly give three days' rations to see you on the topgallant mast of some big beech tree in the heart of Branksome Wood.'

It was too late, however, to draw back, and the squirrel was handed over to Miss Mabel with a good deal of compunction. Then Sailor Jack was anxious to compound with his conscience by asking for kindly treatment for his present; but it was a delicate business, and after floundering about for a minute or two, he blurted out,—

'Miss Mabel! Be sure you be kind to him *for his mother's sake!*'

'O, thank you, Sailor Jack!' said Mabel. 'What a pretty pet! I must have a cage made on purpose for him.'

Therein, poor Jack heard the knell of his last hope, which was that lady Mabel would have refused the present; in which case, we may depend upon it, that little Bushytail would soon have been scampering at liberty among the trees of Branksome Forest. Turning away from the door, with his glazed hat slouched over his brow, Sailor Jack cast an uneasy glance around to see if the coast was clear. He would rather have boarded a ten-gun frigate through a fringe of cutlasses than have a second wigging from Uncle Charlie.

'I feel as mean a cattle as Captain Sneak,' said he, 'who ate all the raisins out of the sailors' Christmas pudding, and told them they were bad for the digestion.' So saying, Jack took himself off with all speed to his 'cabin' in Middlethorpe Major.

That evening, as Uncle Charlie entered Capstan Cabin, he was humming,—

> 'He that steals what isn't his'n,
> When he 's cotched 'll go to prison.'

And as soon as they were all gathered round the cheery hearth, he said seriously,—

'I saw a thief to-day, bairns; but the thing he "cotched" has gone to prison instead of himself, and is under the charge, strange to say, of a female jailer.'

'Tell us all about it, uncle,' said Frank, interested.

'By-and-by, as the people do at a butcher's stall,' said Uncle Charlie. 'First mate, overhaul the log!'

'Uncle Charlie!' said Mabel; 'what do you think Sailor Jack has brought me?'

'How should I know, Queen Mab? Perhaps a two-horned unicorn or a nine-tailed cat.'

'A pretty little squirrel—such a beauty! I am going to have a cage made for it, with a thing made of wire for the squirrel to go round in.'

'Well, that looks fair. Prisoners mostly get a share of the treadmill, and most of them deserve it.'

Little Mabel lapsed into silence, and the budget was opened. Now Uncle Charlie, we are bound to say, had placed a paper in it secretly, and in such a way that it was almost certain to come out at the first dip. Master Harry himself extracted it, and as it was his own turn, he read as follows :—

TRIED FOR HIS LIFE.

FARMER WEBSTER lived away up amongst the hills of New Hampshire, and was as honest and as kindly-tempered a man as you could find through all the country side. He had two sons, both sharp, quick, clever lads, who helped him to cultivate his farm and to dispose of the produce. The name of the eldest was Ezekiel, or 'Zeke,' as his father called him, and of the youngest, Daniel, or Dan, for short. One day Ezekiel set a trap for a woodchuck, which was in the habit of dining off the vegetables in the farmer's garden, and which appeared, from the destruction it wrought, to have a capital appetite.

'What *is* a woodchuck, Uncle Charlie?' said Queen Mab.

'It is a little animal,' said Uncle Charlie, in a peculiar tone, 'not very much unlike a squirrel, and has a tail quite as bushy. It digs a hole in the ground by way of a nest, passes the winter in sleep, and feeds on vegetables. Read on, Harry.'

After the trap had been set a few days, the woodchuck was caught.

'Now we 'll kill the thief,' said Ezekiel. 'You 've done mischief enough, Mr. Woodchuck, and you shall surely die.'

'No, no; don't kill the poor thing,' begged his brother Daniel, pitying the poor captive. 'Take him away into the woods, and let him go.'

'I 'm not such a simpleton,' quoth Zeke. 'If I do, we shall soon have no vegetables at all.'

'But you must not do such a cruel thing,' pleaded Daniel. 'O, brother Zeke, do let him go!'

The boys could not agree about it, so they went and told their father, and left it for him to decide the fate of the captive.

'Well,' said the father, 'I see that you are of two different opinions. There 's the prisoner; you shall be the counsel, one for his life and the other against it, and you shall plead the case before me. I 'll be the judge.'

The trap, with the trembling prisoner caged within, was placed upon the table, the old farmer took his seat by the fire-side, and then Ezekiel, as the counsel for the prosecution, opened the case.

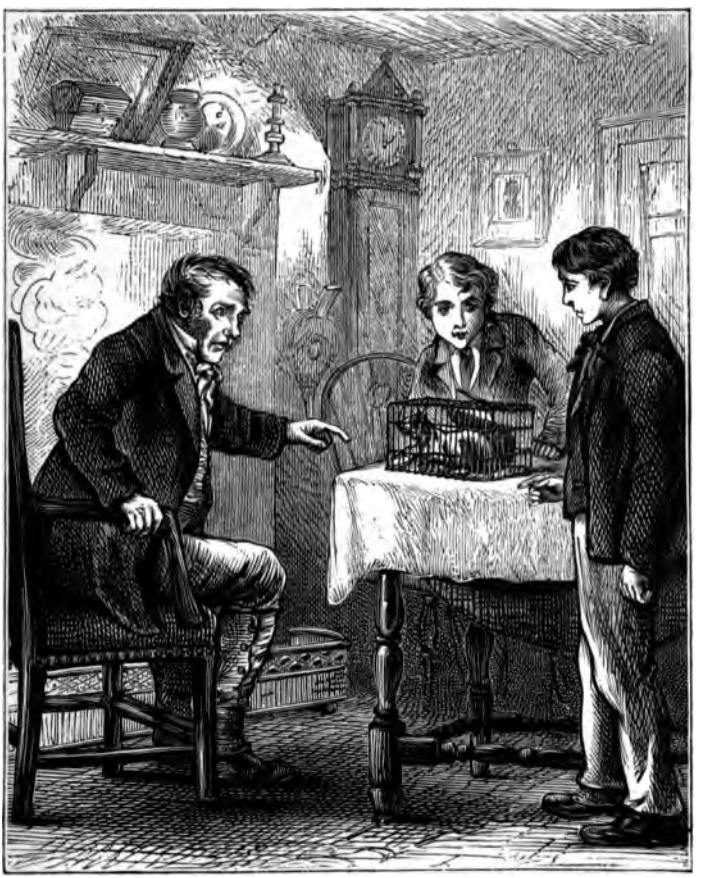
'The prisoner at the bar is naturally of a mischievous and destructive disposition. Wherever he goes he seriously damages valuable property. In our own fields he has eaten the red clover; and in the garden there is not one useful vegetable that is safe from his destructive teeth. Much time, much patience, much labour have been expended in catching him, and it would be the height of folly to set him at liberty again. If you give him life and freedom, he is quite sure to take to his evil habits again. He will then be wary enough not to be caught a second time, and will do still more mischief with impunity. Besides, even if we are willing to suffer from his constant depredations, we have no right to turn such a nuisance free to damage the property of our neighbours, so that not only common justice and self-interest, but love to our neighbours calls loudly for his execution. Finally, if he is killed, his skin will be of some value, though not nearly enough to compensate for the serious mischief he has wrought. For these reasons I submit that the prisoner at the bar ought to pay the last penalty of the law.'

This was all very sound argument, and weighed very much on the old farmer's practical mind. He turned now to his younger son, and said:

'I 'll hear now what you have got to say on the other side.'

Poor Daniel was afraid that his brother had the best of the argument; but when he turned his large, dark eyes on the poor woodchuck, trembling with fear behind the gratings of his narrow prison, his breast swelled with pity; he took courage, and looking the judge in the face, poured forth his plea on its behalf.

'God has made the woodchuck. He made him to live, to enjoy the bright sunshine, the pure air, the free fields, and the open woods. God has not made anything in vain, and the



woodchuck has as much right to the blessings of life as any other living thing. He is not a destroyer of life like the fox or the wolf; he simply eats a few common vegetables, of which we

have more than plenty, and of which we can well spare a part. The little food he requires is as needful to him and as sweet as the food from our mother's table is to us. God gives us our food and all we have, and shall we not spare a little for the innocent dumb creature which He has made? Further, the woodchuck has never broken the laws of nature and of God, as we have done, but strictly follows the simple instincts given him by his Creator. We often pardon those who have done wrong, but the poor unfortunate prisoner has done no wrong, but has simply eaten that he may enjoy the gift of life. God gave him a right to food and life and liberty, and we have no right to deprive him of either. Besides, let us remember that pity and mercy and compassion are amongst the noblest, gentlest, and most beautiful attributes of humanity. I pray you, look at the poor little creature, trembling in its prison, its heart throbbing in a very agony of fear, pleading mutely through its wistful eyes for its life and liberty, as sweet and dear to it as ours can be to us. Do not, with a cold heart and cruel, take away the life which you can never give back again.'

Daniel saw the tears starting to his father's eyes and running down his sunburnt cheeks. The appeal was too much for him; forgetting the dignity of the judge, he sprang from his chair, exclaiming:

'*Zeke! Zeke! you let that woodchuck go!*'

That young and eloquent pleader for mercy came to be the great and honoured Daniel Webster, one of America's most celebrated statesmen and one of her noblest sons; but in all his after life he never gained a nobler victory or one that gained him sweeter pleasure than when he compelled his brother Zeke to let the captive woodchuck go.

The youthful jury in Capstan Cabin had listened with eager interest to the stirring little narrative, and they loudly endorsed the verdict of the kind-hearted farmer. Mabel, however, sat with bended head awhile in thoughtful silence.

'Uncle Charlie,' said she suddenly, 'will you take me to-morrow to see Sailor Jack?'

'Yes, my dear,' said Uncle Charlie, fondly patting her curly head, and fully understanding her design; 'and then we'll go and have a peep at Branksome Wood. Now for Jonathan Giles! Who 's found out his secret?'

'I have,' said Marion, and forthwith read the following answer to Tom's charade.

Farmer Jonathan Giles, if my answer is true,
Went right through the *bar*, and into it too.
He went through on his way to the market, 't is plain,
And then into the *bar* with his illgotten *gain*.
He talked of his *bargain* and called for some gin,
And his wits, they flew out as the liquor ran in.
He mounted his steady old pony called 'Rover,'
When he was, himself, more than 'half-seas-over.'
He pressed it to gallop; it galloped thus far;
And stumbled just as he was passing the *bar*.
He was mumbling, 'My *bargain* I'll spend on my farm,'
When 'Rover' fell prostrate, and shattered his arm—
When he came to his senses, he said, 'I repent!
For surely this fall is for punishment sent.
I'll send back the cash I did wrongfully win;
I'll try to be honest, and will drink no more gin.'
Now tell me, dear Tom, if it's honestly true,
That *my* Farmer Giles is *your* Jonathan too?

'Very good,' quoth Uncle Charlie. 'It is always a bad bargain when the profit is stained with dishonesty and the gain is got by guilt. The wisest man that ever lived tells us in the good Book:

'*Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.*

'Tom, I like your riddle, because there is reason in the rhyme and a sensible lesson when the answer 's found.'

The evening hymn was sung, the nightly prayer was offered, then the little party once more broke up, after wishing dear old Uncle Charlie a loving 'good night.'

THE SIXTH HOUR.

HURRAH, NIMBLETOES!

NO sooner was the breakfast business done and morning prayers over, than Queen Mab set about preparing for her walk to the cabin of Sailor Jack. Uncle Charlie, well pleased to see that his curly-headed darling still held to her secret purpose, and meant to set Bushytail at liberty, was in high glee and as frisky as a schoolboy. The warm coat of the genial old gentleman was speedily wrapped round a warmer heart, and twirling his blackthorn stick as he stood at the door waiting for her majesty, he called out:

'Airy, fairy Mabel,
Hither, if you're able;
For, without a fable,
I am going with you to Middlethorpe the Major.
Will you cut your cable,
Quick as your able?
Or, Queen Mab I'll label
As the hare that ran the tortoise for a wager!'

And a hare she was as far as the fur was concerned, when the dimpled damsel, muffled to the chin, made her appearance with the captive squirrel in her hand still imprisoned in its homely cage. Like a true 'squire of dames,' Uncle Charlie offered to carry it for her, but to this she would by no means consent.

'No, no, Uncle Charlie,' said she; 'I know your fingers will be itching all the while to open the lid, and I want to take it

back to Sailor Jack. Besides, Uncle Charlie must never be seen cruising about "with a slave on board."'

'Aye, aye, little lassie; but it's another thing when you are bearing him to the land of liberty. That's a bit of business in which it's a pleasure to render a helping hand.'

'That's why I want to take it to Jack Harrison,' said Mabel. 'I saw when he gave it me that he felt half inclined to cry; and I can't think why he brought it if he did not want me to have it. I couldn't help laughing when he looked straight down his nose, and asked me to "be kind to him for his mother's sake."'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Uncle Charlie. 'Did he say that? Poor Jack! He's got an honest and tender heart beneath his guernsey shirt. He found that for want of looking at his compass he had sailed into shoal water, and so he was doing his best to tack about and try to sail into the offing again. Depend on't, Queen Mab, it's a good thing to keep your eye on the needle, and navigate according to the chart; for Truth and Right will always save us from stranding on a lee shore. Captain Lawless lost his ship on Retribution Reefs, because he "did as he liked," while Captain Conscience brought *his* bark safe to harbour, because he did as he ought.'

The little yacht Queen Mab and her convoy were all the while forging ahead through the clear, crisp air, and in due time hove in sight of that familiar landmark the little ivy-clad church of Middlethorpe Major. Two or three little rosy-faced urchins were playing by the churchyard gate as they passed.

'Hallo, young 'uns!' shouted Uncle Charlie, cheerily as usual; 'how is it you are not at school?'

The 'young 'uns' suspended their game and touched their caps instantly.

'It's a holiday, Sir,' said a chubby young Briton of six summers; 'an' it's Christmas time.'

'Christmas time! What's that?' said Uncle Charlie.

'Why it's when Jesus was born a little baby, Sir;' 'And the waits sing, "Hark! the herald angels sing," Sir;' 'And folks give Christmas-boxes, Sir,' were the answers of each in turn, the last probably not without some hope of favours to come.

'That's right,' said Uncle Charlie. 'Now tell me which is the nearest way to Middlethorpe Minor.'

The youngsters thought he was quizzing them, and that he knew the way quite as well as they did, and so they were silent, with a sheepish look upon their faces.

'Now then, my hearties! Here's a silver sixpence for him who can tell me clearly.'

Encouraged by the coveted prize, Chubby-face pointed in the direction of the village, saying:

'When you come to Helpham Cross, Sir, you must keep straight along the Righton Road, till you come to the Stepping Stones over Passbury Brook; then you go through the churchyard and up the hill; an' that's Middlethorpe Minor.'

'Thank you, my lad,' said Uncle Charlie. 'Why, do you know, that's the way to heaven!'

The lads were thunderstricken; and even Mabel could not see what her uncle was driving at.

'Why, you all look as though you were doubling Cape Wonder in a fog. I say again: the way to Middlethorpe Minor is the way to heaven. First, you see, you go to Help'em Cross; and they who don't go to the Cross will miss their way altogether. Then you go straight along the Right-on Road, and be sure that the crooked road of wrong will never lead to heaven. Then you cross the Stepping Stones, which Jesus Christ, who was born on Christmas Day, has placed for us all through the river of death. Then you go through the churchyard, for we must all die and rise again. Then up the hill of Mount Zion, and there's heaven! Here, my lads,' continued Uncle Charlie, awarding to each listening youngster a welcome Christmas-box, 'be sure you all go to Help'em Cross, and then keep straight along the Right-on Road!'

In a few minutes the two voyagers were at the door of Sailor Jack.

'Come in!' said that worthy, in answer to their knock; 'come in, and show your colours!'

Sailor Jack had got his hooked arm laid upon the little deal table, and with his solitary hand was rubbing away at his iron member till it shone as bright as a meat-hook in a butcher's

shop. He jumped to his feet in a moment as he recognised his visitors.

'I ax your pardon,' said he, with a twinkle; 'I was just washing my *hand*, for I 've so little work for it to do this weather that it's apt to get rusty.' Suddenly spying the squirrel, he shouted,—

'Hallo, Nutcracker! You 've turned up again like a bad ha'penny. Stow your hammock, and mount the crosstrees; and may I be mastheaded in a gale o' wind if ever I clap a living thing under hatches again!'

Sailor Jack was about to lift the lid when Mabel interposed:

'Stop, Jack! Let 's set the poor thing free in Branksome Wood.'

'Aye, aye!' said the delighted tar. 'Them 's the seas for Bushytail to cruise in. We 'll cut his cable under the beech tree where I found him; then he can either hoist his sail for a voyage or steer straight for his nest. Ever since I seized him like a pirate I 've felt like the old mariner who shot an albatross. "Sailor Jack," said I to myself, "you 're a mean, skulking, lubberly sneak; you ought to be sent to quod for poaching. I 've a good mind to stick my hook in your neck'ercher, and hang you in your cabin till you 're as dead as a herring!"'

Miss Mabel laughed heartily, being mightily tickled at the idea of such a startling feat of gymnastics.

'Never mind, Sailor Jack,' said she; 'we are going to "be kind to him for his mother's sake."'

No time was lost in conveying the innocent prisoner to his native spot in Branksome Wood; and at last Sailor Jack, to whom Mabel had transferred the cage, undid the wire with eager hands. Out leaped Master Squirrel like a lightning flash, and with bushy tail straight on end with gladness, mounted a lofty beech tree in the twinkling of an eye.

'Hurrah, hurrah!' shouted Jack, twirling the empty cage on his hook, waving his 'sou-wester,' and dancing a jig with delight. 'Hurrah, Nimbletoes! Go an' tell your mother! See how he swims—like a flying fish—in an' out, like a Mother Carey's chicken!'

Uncle Charlie had his full reward when lovely little Mabel

turned her beaming eyes upon him, and, leaning on his hands, said:

'Uncle Charlie, I 'm so glad we 've "let that woodchuck go!' "

On their way through the wood, wending homeward by a different route, Uncle Charlie testified his satisfaction with their

morning walk by impromptu snatches of song, which kept little Mabel in merry mood right up to the Manor House gate. One of his songs became a prime favourite in Capstan Cabin; and as I feel sure it will be a prime favourite also with my youthful readers, here it is:

LITTLE NED AND THE SQUIRREL;

OR,

'LET THOSE LAUGH WHO WIN.'

'HA, ha, ha!' said the Squirrel in a tree;
'Ha, ha, ha! what a pleasure to be free!'
'Ha, ha, ha!' said the laughing little Ned,
'Mine you *shall* be before I go to bed.'

CHORUS:

'Ha, ha, ha!' said the Squirrel in a tree,
'Ha, ha, ha! Will you try to come for me?'

Quick, quick, quickly then, up the tree he went;
Quick, quick Nimbletoes saw his kind intent.
'Ha, ha, ha! come along, my little man!
Ha, ha, ha! You may catch me if you can.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' chuckled Ned; 'and so I will!'
'O, dear, dear! but you must not treat me ill?'
'Ha, ha, ha! here 's a cage to put you in;
Ha, ha, ha! Sir, we 'll soon see who will win.'

'Ha, ha, ha! what a daring little man!
Ha, ha, ha! now then, follow if you can.'
Hop, skip, jump! over seven trees or more,
Left poor Neddy just where he was before.

'Ha, ha, ha!' said the squirrel in his glee;
'Ha, ha, ha! pray you, try this other tree.
Come, come, come! you 're a clever little man;
Ha, ha, ha! you may catch me if you can.

'Ha, ha, ha! you are doing very well.'
'Oh, oh, oh!' shouted Ned, and down he fell!
'Oh, oh, oh!' for the pain was hard to bear.
'Ha, ha, ha!' said the Squirrel; 'are you there?'

'Oh, oh, oh!' said poor Neddy in his pain.
'Ha, ha, ha! Neddy, won't you try again?
God made squirrels amongst the trees to bound;
Ha, ha, ha! boys should walk upon the ground.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' said the Squirrel, 'I am free!'
'Oh, oh, oh!' said poor Neddy, 'so I see;
Man or boy, though, may catch you when he brings——'
'Ha, ha, ha! sir, a clever pair of wings!'

The blazing logs were burning merrily on the hearth of Capstan Cabin when Uncle Charlie and his 'bonny bairns' formed their customary semi-circle round the fire. Little Mabel, at her uncle's request, related in her artless fashion the incidents in connection with the visit to Sailor Jack and Branksome Wood. The loving listeners endorsed her conduct with a round of cheers; and it may be taken for granted that kindness to animals, which ought to be an important part of everybody's religion, was more than ever impressed as a duty upon the young folks of Middlethorpe Manor. Just previous to the breaking up of the party for the evening that incorrigible Tom must needs propose a conundrum:

'Why is Mabel's squirrel like a stranded ship?'

'Because it 's settled down,' said Harry.

'Because it 's a loss to its owner,' said Ida.

'Because it 's not under command,' said Frank.

'Because it will take no more journeys,' said Mabel.

'Because it will be hard work to take it off again,' said Marion.

'Because it knows what it is to be out of its element,' said Uncle Charlie.

'No,' said Master Tom; 'all your answers will pass muster, but they are none of them right. Do you give it up? Then I 'll tell you. Because it has been abandoned by its owners, and left high and dry upon the *beech*.'

'Oh, oh!' was the universal chorus; 'what a pun!'

'Puns,' said Uncle Charlie solemnly, 'must be *pun*ished.'

'Oh, oh! there 's another,' said Frank.

And forthwith both the offenders were bound over to pay the usual penalty into the Budget. Once again the 'Children's Hour' was over, the little party dispersed, and Capstan Cabin was emptied of its guests.

THE SEVENTH HOUR.

RINGING THE CHANGES.

'NOW, my hearties,' said Uncle Charlie, as he and his 'youngsters' gathered round the cheery hearth in Capstan Cabin,—'make a ring, as the ropes said to the church bells.'

'We'll do it the moment we are *told*, as the bells said to the ropes,' said ready-witted Frank.

'Oh, oh!' said Harry, shocked at such punning perversity; 'I protest against it. It is high time to make a*ppeal*.'

'And yet you are helping to *ring the changes*,' quoth Ida.

'And a good thing too. Why shouldn't we all *chime in?*' said merry Maid Marion.

'Hadn't you two girls better be dumb *belles?*' inquired that sad punster Tom.

Little Mabel, all unconscious of the aptness of her remark, here interposed with, 'There! we have had enough of bells. Hadn't you all better *hold your tongues?*'

A burst of laughter, loud and long, resounded through Capstan Cabin, and so amid quips and cranks and pleasantries Uncle Charlie called out, 'Overhaul the log!'

Master Tom, the delinquent of the preceding evening, had first to pay the piper; drawing a folded paper from the Budget, he read the following capital story.

JACK EASY;

OR, THE WAY TO BE HAPPY.

'JACK EASY was a young fellow of good family, but of bad training. He had many good points about him, but for want of religious principle and godly guidance they were of little use to him; and everybody said that, as soon as he was 'out of leading strings' he would 'go to the dogs.' At the death of his father he had a good fortune left him, and careless Jack mounted his wilful hobby without ever having been properly broken in. He galloped over the plains of fancy, went off at full canter on the road to dissipation, and leaped over all the five-barred gates of advice and discretion.

It may well be supposed that in due time his untrained filly gave him a fall; poor Jack came down, sure enough. But his spirits were high, and his hobby was in good mettle, being well baited on the 'wild oats' his master was sowing so plentifully; so he shook himself, brushed off the dirt, and mounted again as headstrong as ever.

He now resolved to sit more firmly in the saddle; but as he had not been trained in a riding-school, and did not know how to nurse his pace, away he went again, neck or nothing, floundering in the ditch of drunkenness, risking his neck through Gamble Gap, bespattered in cross roads and bye-ways, betattered and torn in hedges and brambles, until at last he plunged into the swamp of bankruptcy, and struggled through to find himself beggared in cash, a pauper in character, with his home in a gaol.

Here poor Jack had time to think, and think he did, to such good purpose that he found out he was a fool, and as he thought of all his harms and losses, he said, 'It serves me right.' The knowledge of the disease, they say, is half the cure. If Jack Easy gets another chance, he will discard spurs and get a better bridle, and best of all, will turn his steed out of Lawless Lane into Rectitude Road.

Well, as Providence would have it, some relation left Jack a handsome legacy. So, free from the jail, he mounted his nag and rode cautiously. Turning into the road of Economy, he

stopped at a little inn called the 'Good Resolve,' borrowed a martingale from an old ostler called Experience, and, for the first time in his life, he used a *curb*. Cantering along at a quiet jog-trot pace, many a dashing rider passed him and laughed at his speed; but he had no need to envy them, for some of them got into deep ruts, others into bogs and quagmires, and others again were thrown from their saddles, to the imminent danger of their necks. He would now get off and open a gate in preference to leaping it, and if the gate was locked, Jack sensibly concluded that he had no business there, and so taking the first turning to the *right* he inquired his way. His steed, meanwhile, bears him safely along under the influence of a change of corn, which he found 'hid in a field,' and Jack enjoys the scene as he goes, with pleasure sparkling in his eye.

One of Jack's greatest pleasures now is to rein up his steed and alight to help some fallen traveller, to brush off the dirt, bind his wounds, advise the use of the curb, and recommend a slower pace, another road, and a safer diet for his restless steed. So Jack journeys along; happy himself because he is content, making other wayfarers happy as he goes. He often lifts his eyes to westward with a wistful gaze, and declares that he can catch in the reddening sunlight a glimpse of the home from which he once galloped so madly away, but to which, thanks to Him who gave him a better mind, he is getting nearer every day. We wish him a pleasant journey; we know he'll get a hearty welcome.

'Well done, Tom!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Your friend Jack is a picture worth studying. Didn't he ride at a rattling rate on the road that leads to ruin?'

'Uncle Charlie! said Ida, 'you'll get the cramp at the end of your tongue if you reel off your *r s* at that rate, besides that, the stock will run short.'

'Go to London, then, Miss Ida*r*, and clip off all the extra*r s* the cockneys use so needlessly. But to return to Jack Easy. It was a grand thing for him when he turned aside——'

'And began to travel on the Right-on Road,' said Mabel,

with a smile, remembering her uncle's conversation with the chubby children by the churchyard wall.

'Right, Queen Mab. The King's highway lies straight through the regions of safety, duty, and delight, and leads right up to the gate of heaven. I think Tom's little parable might be mended at one point. Can anybody find a gap in it?'

The youthful critics were some little time before they were able to hit upon the weak point.

'I think I know,' said Marion, at length. 'It's where Jack Easy stops at the inn of "Good Resolve." He should have gone from there to Mount Faith, and through Pardon Gate or something of that sort.'

'Yes,' said Mabel; 'and he should have kept calling somewhere on the road to get help to keep him on the right way.'

'True, my beauties,' said Uncle Charlie earnestly. 'I have no faith in reform that does not go to the Cross; and only by the aid of answered prayer can poor, weak mortals keep doing right. However, it's a good story, and so we will give three cheers for Tom.'

The meed of praise was given with a will, and then Miss Ida suggested that they should have a game of rhymes, 'for the fun of the thing.'

'On one condition,' said Uncle Charlie; 'that we have both rhyme and reason. What shall it be about?'

'A mouse,' said Mabel, speaking at random.

'Very well,' said Uncle Charlie; 'then nibble away. And as Ida was the first to suggest the game, and Queen Mab has chosen the subject, they shall make the first two lines between them.'

'Let me begin then,' said Curly-head; 'and then I shall not have to make a rhyme.'

'I would not steal,' said a little wee mouse.

To which Ida responded—

One cold winter's day as she swept up her house.

'Now, Master Harry, put in your oar.'

Her big brother laughed, and said, with a grin.

'Now Marion, splice the rope.'

Pray, get as you can, for eating 's no sin.

'Master Frank, spin a hank.'

Then wee little mousey just tidied her hair.

'Nephew Tom, take a turn at the windlass."

And ate a dry crumb as she sat on a chair.

'Now, Uncle Charlie,' said little Mabel; 'it 's your turn. But please let me, and then you can make a rhyme.'

Big brother mousey spent the day in a fret.

Whereupon Uncle Charlie added—

Longing for rations he never could get.

Quoth Ida—

Wee little mousey, her beauty to keep.

'Now, Mate Harry, keep the ball rolling.'

Went early to bed, and fell fast asleep.

'Marion, take a turn at the wheel.'

Big brother mousey took a walk I may tell.

Frank followed with—

He found some roast cheese and enjoyed himself well.

'Hallo!' said Uncle Charlie; 'that young gentleman is getting himself into mischief. I 'll warrant that cheese was never toasted for him. He 'll come to a bad end if he doesn't mind. Pay it out, Master Tom.'

Wee little mousey slept on quite serene.

Here Mabel looked again at Uncle Charlie, who promptly cut the knot for her, with—

She dreamt of a palace, and thought she was queen.

'Now, Mabel; cut a cable's length.'

Big brother mousey went off pit-a-pat.

And Ida added—

But big brother mousey was caught by a cat.

Harry was ready with his contribution—

Poor brother mousey, we bid him good bye.

This time Mabel was ready with a rhyme—

I think he repented with tears in his eye.

'Well done, Mabel. That 's capital!'

Forgetting that it was Uncle Charlie's turn, Ida added—

Wee little mousey heard pussy cat say,

Uncle instantly followed with—

'I'll never eat those who keep out of my way.'

'Now, Harry, we must put a moral at the end of it.'

Harry began to moralise as follows—

'Be honest,' quoth pussy; 'I'd have you believe.

'That 's right. Lend a hand, Marion.'

That as sure as I catch you, I'll kill if you thieve.'

'Heave ho, Frank! the anchor's nearly home

'I know,' said wee mousey, 'howe'er we are dressed.

'One more twist, Tom.'

To steal is a sin, to be honest is best.

'Queen Mab, will your majesty kindly proceed?'

Mabel had some difficulty with the moral, but managed to tack on—

If folks are not honest they will come to grief.

'Aye, marry,' said Uncle Charlie.

For as sure as I live, there's a cat for each thief.

'Well done all of us!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Too many cooks have not spoiled *that* broth at any rate. Now let 's serve it up in one dish; it will be a savoury mess, fit for a captain's table.'

'HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.'

BY THE CAPTAIN AND CREW OF CAPSTAN CABIN.

'I WOULD not steal,' said a little wee mouse,
One cold winter's day, as she swept up her house.
Her big brother laughed, and said with a grin,
'Get as you can, for eating 's no sin.'
Then wee little mousey just tidied her hair,
And ate a dry crumb as she sat on a chair.
Big brother mouse spent the day in a fret,
Longing for rations he never could get.
Wee little mousey, her beauty to keep,
Went early to bed, and fell fast asleep.
Big brother mouse took a walk, I may tell;
He found some roast cheese, and enjoyed himself well.
Wee little mousey slept on quite serene;
She dreamt of a palace, and thought she was queen.
Big brother mousey went off pit-a-pat;
But big brother mousey was caught by a cat.
Poor brother mousey! we bid him good bye;
I think he repented with tears in his eye.
Wee little mousey heard pussy cat say,
'I 'll never eat those who keep out of my way.
Be honest,' quoth pussy; 'I 'd have you believe,
That as sure as I catch you, I 'll kill if you thieve.'
'I know,' said wee mousey, 'howe'er we are dressed,
To steal is a sin, to be honest is best.
If folks are not honest, they will come to grief,
For as sure as I live, there 's a cat for each thief.'

Here Master Tom, the poet, produced a folded paper from his pocket, and the kindly owner of the white head and the youthful heart said,—

'Well, Tom, if you 've got something good, out with it, as the boy said to the dentist, when his tooth ached.'

Tom with a modest blush read the following charade, which, as he said, he had made 'out of his own head.'

SIR ROBERT THE KNIGHT.

Sir Robert the knight was a gluttonous wight;
He revelled on fish, flesh, and fowl;
In wine and in wassail, he took great delight,
And drowned all his wits in the bowl.

The feasting was over, the wine cup was drained,
And Sir Robert, he sought his repose;
Staggered off to his bed, with his features as red,—
As red, one and all, as his nose.

Sir Robert the knight arose ere the light,
And swore he would go for a ride;
He roused his retainers, who awoke in a fright,
And waited for what might betide.

Sir Robert the knight strode along to the gate,
To the gate of his donjon keep:
And there stood my *last* in its trappings of state,
Instead of in slumber and sleep.

Through my *first* in the darkness he galloped away;
When, lo! on his saddle before him,
A horrible hag had mounted his nag,
The nag in its trappings, that bore him.

With a hand on his throat and a hand in his hair,
Like a demon she gripped him and tore.
He gasped and he gurgled, so ill did he fare,
But the hag only gripped him the more.

At mad speed went my *last*, black and chill was my *first*,
In terror and horror and fright
He groaned 'neath the burden with which he was cursed,
Poor, luckless Sir Robert the knight!

As he peered through my *first*, on my terrified *last*,
He saw a wide gulf! He must fall!
With a start, in a sweat, he awoke to his fate;
His fate was my horrible *whole!*

Now, all you who list, attend to the gist,
The gist of the story I tell:
Had Sir Robert been wise, I am sure he'd have miss'd
Both the hag and her horrible spell.

'A hag and a horrible spell! eh?' quoth Uncle Charlie, 'That's a pretty couple to introduce among the select company of Capstan Cabin; and especially just when one is going to bed! However, I'm happy to think that ghosts are at a discount at the Manor House. Some day I'll tell you a true ghost story; though it was funny business for all that. Miss Marion, you must find out who this old hag is; and after we have had one look at her, we'll turn her out for good, and stick to brown bread and oatmeal porridge.

The usual evening devotions were conducted, and bidding Uncle Charlie a hearty good night, the 'youngsters' repaired to the city of Feathersley, county of Beds, in the land of Nod, and found cosy lodgings in a quiet neighbourhood called Blanket Row.

THE EIGHTH HOUR.

UNCLE CHARLIE'S TURN.

'NOW, Uncle Charlie! It's your turn.'

Such was the greeting given with one consent to the fine old skipper when he and his youthful crew gathered once again round the cabin fire. Uncle Charlie's stories were always good in themselves, but they were always made ten times better by his pleasant and cheery way of telling them, and ten times better still because he was such a grand old man, and was so dearly loved by his orphan nephews and nieces, to whom he had become, as he said he would, 'father and mother both.'

'Now, Uncle Charlie, it's your turn.'

'All right, all right, young un's, as the schoolmaster said when he gave his boys their copy-books. What do you want, and how will you have it?'

'O, something about sailors, or the sea, or ships, or foreign countries, or——'

'Belay there, Master Frank! That's a wide enough sea to cruise in. Give me your ears, as the farmer said to the cornfield, and listen to my story, which is all the better because it's true.'

DICK SIMMONS;

OR, THE GENEROUS SAILOR.

WHEN I was the skipper of the good ship *Madeline*, as fine a bark as ever wore bunting, and as taut and trim as a nobleman's yacht, I had a young sailor in the crew called Dick Simmons. He was a smart, handy youngster. His diligence in duty and his sunny temper made him a favourite with all on board, from captain to cabin-boy. Poor Dick had neither father nor mother, nor indeed any relation in the world that he knew of. He often used to say that he was nothing but a derelict, or a bit of flotsam tossed like a chip on the sea of life. He had managed to pick up a smattering of education, and was just the sort of lad to run straight, and win credit and character wherever he might be.

Well, what I 'm going to tell you happened many years ago, in the days when the stage-coach had not been run off the road by the steam-engine. The *Madeline* had just come home from a long voyage, and Dick, with a big lump of pay money, 'boarded the Portsmouth coach,' as he said, 'to make a land voyage to London.' It was early on a dark November morning, and he was hardly able to see his companion passengers on 'the deck of the lumbering barge.'

Presently he perceived that his next neighbour was either very ill or in great trouble, by the sighs and sobs which broke from her. At last a heavy jolt of the coach drew a faint shriek from her, and threw her against Dick's shoulder.

'Avast there!' said he; 'take care how you steer, or we may roll over, d' ye see. Lean against me, and welcome; we shall soon make some port or other, and a glass of warm grog 'll cheer your heart.'

'You are very kind,' said a feeble voice; 'I am indeed little able to bear the motion, much less the jolting, but I shall be better by-and-by.'

'Aye, aye,' said Dick; 'I hope so. We shall get into smooth water after sailing a few more knots, and so steer clear of the stones.'

No answer was returned, and a dead silence continued until they came to the first stage for changing horses. On the appearance of a light, Dick turned to look at his neighbour, and saw a young and sickly-looking woman, who seemed too feeble to sit upright.

'Anchors and handspikes! Poor soul!' said Dick in surprise. 'You seem to want ballast. It 'll never do to steer this course. Why don't you tack into the cabin?'

'Because—because it 's not convenient,' she replied. 'Besides, I have more air here.'

'Aye, aye. But a few such squalls as we have had may throw you overboard. It 's not steady enough for you on the upper deck.'

Dick called for some grog and biscuits, and jumped down to look through the window of the coach. 'Hey!' he called to the sickly woman; 'here's plenty of sea-room here. Come down into the state cabin. Steersman!' said he to the coachman; 'clear the gangway, an' let 's hoist the poor lass into this berth.'

'No objection in life, master,' said coachee; 'but you knows outside an' inside 's different.'

'Stow that!' said Dick, rattling his gold and silver; 'I 'll pay the difference between steerage and cabin fare.'

Vainly did the young woman protest against accepting the benevolent offer, declaring that she should 'manage very well.'

'Look 'ee, my lass,' said Dick; 'you 're on a slippery forecastle; you ain't got your sea legs, an' maybe you'll be overboard in the dark an' founder before a life-buoy can be cast off. I mean to put you safe under hatches, out of the way of squalls and foul weather.'

At last the poor woman tearfully and gratefully consented, nor did she reject the biscuits, though the grog was more than she could manage.

With a warm 'God bless you!' ringing in his ears, Dick mounted to his seat again, and the journey was continued until they stopped at an inn to dine. Here he handed out his weakly fellow-passenger with great care and good manners, and then offered the same assistance to three ladies who were in the coach. The first two, with a toss of the head, rejected the hand so

politely proffered, and muttering something about people 'keeping their places,' swept proudly into the inn. Dick looked after them a moment and murmured: 'Too much canvas there; more bunting than ballast. Shouldn't wonder at a capsize.' The third passenger was a very pleasant and comely old lady, who

was evidently much interested in the sailor's proceedings. She readily accepted the proferred hand; and was aided in her exit from the coach.

Passing into the inn, Dick ordered refreshment for his almost helpless charge.

'Bring anything you 've got, steward,' said he to the waiter; 'I 'll pay the piper.'

Some warm port wine, a fresh egg, and some bread and butter were set before the thankful invalid.

'Cheer up, my lass,' said Dick; 'you and I 'll sail in company through this voyage; an' I 'll lay a belaying pin to the captain's sextant that we 'll weather the storm.'

The old lady heard and saw all, with a glow of high satisfaction on her face, and followed Dick out of the room.

'I admire your humanity, my friend,' said she. 'Are you an entire stranger to that poor girl?'

'Never saw her in my life before,' quoth Dick; 'but when there 's a ship among the breakers, whatever name she has, whatever sort of figure-head she carries, or whatever flag she sails under, out goes the life-boat; and it shall never be said that Dick Simmons was so mean a lubber as not to take an oar.'

'Simmons! Richard Simmons! did you say?' said the lady in a startled tone.

'No, ma'am; not exactly that. *Dick* Simmons is the measure on 't; that 's in the log, and will be until A.B. seaman is rubbed out for "mate."'

'May I ask where you were born?' said the lady.

'Somewheres foreign, I reckon,' said Dick; 'but I hail from Beachy Head, where the *Oberon* went down in a storm, which washed me ashore with bare life, and too young even to know my own name, which was marked on my clothes.'

'Simmons! Richard! *Oberon!* Then you must be my brother Richard's son!

'Why, what must be must, ma'am; but it 's all fog to me, with a murky sky, the compass lost, an' the binnacle lamp blown out. All I knows is, that I was picked up like a wet mop by an honest old salt by Beachy Head. He was a fisherman, and he fished me up, and his wife, good soul! was all the mother ever I knew. When the old man died I was flung on the world, or rather on the sea; for I took to the water like a duck, and in it and on it I 've been swimming ever since.

The old lady gripped his rough hand as she said: 'My heart warmed to you from the first. I can see my brother Richard in every line of your face. He and his wife and little child sailed from the West Indies in the *Oberon*. It was believed that all

were lost in that ill-fated ship. Thank God! that one Simmons is spared, and that I have found what I have been longing for for more than twenty years.'

Under these new circumstances the journey was continued. Both Dick and his newly-found relative tended the poor invalid all the way to town, and nothing could exceed the poor woman's joy when she heard that her trying journey had led to such a pleasant discovery.

Dick handed his ward over to the care of waiting friends, and then, linking his arm in that of his newly-found Aunt, the happy pair went home, his home as well as hers. The declining years of the old lady were gladdened by the love and care of her noble nephew. At her death Dick inherited her fortune, and, quoth Uncle Charlie, my friend Richard Simmons employs it to this day as generously as he used his sailor's pay-money when he made that famous 'voyage' on the London coach.

Uncle Charlie's youthful hearers greeted the close of the story with a round of cheers. Taking the old Bible from its place, and turning over its yellow leaves, the old man read.

He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord: and, look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.

Then they read over the story of the Good Samaritan, and as the young folks listened, each resolved as occasion served to be a genuine and Christ-like neighbour to the suffering, the needy, and the poor.

'Now, Miss Marion,' said Uncle Charlie, 'have you found out the secret of the witch who rode, not on a broomstick, as ladies of that sisterhood are said to do, but on the saddle of Sir Robert the knight? If so, trot my lady out, big bonnet and buckles and all.'

Hereupon Miss Marion read her answer to Tom's charade.

If **Sir** Robert the knight had done what was right,
He would not have had such a scare,
Nor **dreamed** of a ride with a hag through the *night*
On the back of his bonny bay *mare*.

If you wish for a ride with a hag by your side,
  Or seated astride on the crupper,
Eat and drink like a fool, let appetite rule,
  And always 'enjoy a late supper.'

But if you decide to make temperance your guide,
  I warrant you never will rue,
Through the *night* you 'll ne'er ride on a *mare* terrified;
  And the *nightmare* will never ride you.

'That 's about the size of it,' said uncle. 'If diet cures more than doctors, depend upon it that gluttony kills more than guns. A double charge will crack a cannon; too much cargo will sink a ship, and people who eat more than is good for them are as sure to come to grief. Unlike the cannon, they are cracked to start with; but like a ship, they never clap the hatches on till the hold 's full. An overplenty of pudding brings pimples and needs pills. Light suppers make long days, and no suppers at all make pleasant nights. Who sups to surfeit sups to sorrow. A feast to-night and a fever to-morrow. Temperance is the best physic, and intemperance, either in eating or drinking, is the shortest way to the churchyard. Enough is as good as a feast; aye, and a good deal better; for a feast is generally a bilious business, while "enough" has no morning headaches.'

'Uncle Charlie,' said Tom, 'whatever does Solomon mean when he says that a man who is given to appetite might just as well put a knife to his throat?'

'Nay, I don't know, unless he means that in either case he is committing suicide; and so, if he means to do it at all, he had better take the shorter way, so as to give the least trouble to other people and make room for somebody who will have more sense. You may depend upon it, that man or woman, boy or girl, who is "given to appetite," will find that their appetite will give them trouble, and not only shorten their life, but make what there is of it as full of pains and miseries as a hedgehog is of prickles or a July wasp of eggs. Now we 'll change the subject. Harry, boy, overhaul the log!'

The familiar and bulky green bag was here produced, and

Master Frank proceeded to read a short but admirable story, which is as true as it is beautiful.

THE WONDERFUL WALL.

THERE is a little town in Germany called Sleswick, and about fifty years ago its inhabitants had a hard time of it. It was war time, and they were expecting every day to be deprived of their houses and property, and perhaps of their lives, by an angry enemy. On one night especially they were in great fear, for a party of reckless soldiers were expected to pass that way. A little way beyond the town, and close to the high road on which the soldiers were to come, there was a solitary house, much larger and better than the rest. A pious old lady lived there, who knew how good and safe it was, by prayer and faith, to put her trust in God, who calls Himself the Keeper of His people. In her prayers she often used the words of an old German hymn:—

'Surround us, Lord, and so,
Lest we should fall,
Raise up a wall,
And guard us from the foe.'

On the morning to which I have referred, her little grandson, who lived with her, went to her side after morning prayer, and said,—

'Grandmother, what do you mean by praying that the Lord would build a wall round the house? You don't think He would, do you?'

'My dear boy,' said grandmother, 'there are many kinds of walls that God can build to protect His people besides such as are built of stone. All I meant was, that in some way or other He would guard us from the danger we are in.'

The night came; it was a terrible night of winter storm, of wind and snow. In the darkness the aged widow knew by the trampling of horses, the firing of guns, and the shouts of angry men, that the wild Cossacks were pouring along the road. She listened and trembled; she prayed for her poorer neighbours,

and expected every moment to hear the enemy thundering at her door. The little boy, awoke by the dreadful noise, came and hid his head on grandmother's lap in terror. So the night passed on; but never a knock came to the door, never a rough voice commanded them to open. When daylight came, they discovered the reason of their safety. The wind had drifted the snow into a big bank or a wall between the house and the road, so that the terrible troopers could not even see their dwelling as they passed.

'My boy,' said the old lady, 'don't you see how easy it is for God to protect those who trust Him? Whatever you do, and wherever you go, be good, do right, and trust in God; "for they that put their trust in the Lord shall never be confounded."'

'Aye, aye!' said Uncle Charlie. 'He will always find a sheltered port for His people when a storm is brewing. They are well befriended who have God for a Friend. Bairns, never forget to put yourselves beneath the care of Him who "neither slumbers nor sleeps."'

Taking down the big Bible, Uncle Charlie read the one hundred and twenty-first Psalm, and then he turned to two other places and read,—

'*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.*

'*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.*'

'Now, Mabel,' continued Uncle Charlie, 'sing us one verse of your evening hymn.'

Mabel's sweet young voice trilled out the trustful strains:—

'O little child, lie still and sleep:
Jesus is near,
Thou need'st not fear,—
No one need fear whom God doth keep
By day and night;
Then lay thee down in slumber deep
Till morning light.'

'Good nights' were once more interchanged, and Capstan Cabin was untenanted of its guests.

THE NINTH HOUR.

A DAY WITH JACK FROST.

'HO! Ida and Frank and Mabel, I'll thank,
And Marion and big Master Harry,
To come at my call; be quick, one and all;
I pray you no longer to tarry.
Let us up and away at the dawn of the day,
Our captain is dear Uncle Charlie;
He waits for you here, I pray you appear,
And follow without any parley.

'We are off in a trice, away to the ice,
Ye Middlethorpe sons and daughters;
For jolly Jack Frost is now at his post,
And has frozen the Branksome waters.
Through the bracing air we shall soon be there;
Let nobody keep us waiting;
But over the snow away will we go,
And jollily join in the skating.'

This was the morning ditty of Master Tom, the poet, as he stood by the side of his little Shetland pony, which with other long-tailed steeds of the same breed were waiting, saddled and bridled, at the door of the Manor House, ready for an excursion to Branksome Mere, which, thanks to a three days' frost, was covered with a splendid sheet of ice full three inches thick.

Uncle Charlie and his stout cob 'Skipper' were also ready for the frolic. 'Skipper' was not so named from any notable

tendency to skip; that would never do for his sixteen-stone rider; but because everything almost that the cheery Captain owned was called by some sea-going name. The very razor with which his broad honest chin was clean shaven he called his 'cutter,' and everybody knew when he asked for his 'marling-spike' that his stout blackthorn stick was the thing he wanted.

Master Tom by tacking 'quoth I' to the end of every second line, was singing his ditty to the rollicking tune of 'Buy a Broom,' and with such success, that Uncle Charlie and the high-spirited youngsters joined laughingly in the final refrain,—

'But over the snow away will we go,
And jollily join in the skating (quoth I).'

'Off we go!' said Uncle Charlie, 'as the sparrows said to the bird-boy's rattle.' And soon the ponies' hoofs were ringing

over the frozen snow as the merry party rode towards Brank-some Mere. Queen Mab's horsewomanship was not equal to more than a quiet canter, so that the pace did not prevent a little quiet conversation.

'Uncle Charlie,' said Ida, 'Marion and I called to see Widow Wetherill yesterday. She is confined to her house with rheumatism, and Sailor Jack was reading to her.'

'Aye?' said Uncle Charlie; 'that was a perilous voyage for Jack. I warrant he found it a bit of awkward navigation, and not at all plain sailing, in a sea of print. What was he reading?'

'The *Pilgrim's Progress*. He would like to have stopped when we went in; but Widow Wetherill wanted to know how Christian and Hopeful got out of Doubting Castle, and the hands of Giant Despair; so Jack picked his way, running the point of his hook along the lines, so as to "know his bearings," as he said; pegging at it, slow and sure, until he came to the place where the giant beats the pilgrims with his cudgel. Jack could not stand that.

'"What a hulking old lubber!" he said with indignation. "He desarved clapping in irons in his own jail!"

'"Yes," said the widow; "but they shouldn't have got into 'Bye-path Meadows,' you see."

'"Blow his meadows! an old pirate! What harm did it do 'em to let the poor fellows have a bit of a nap?"'

The little party could not help laughing at Jack's queer way of looking at it.

'Ha, ha!' said Uncle Charlie; 'Jack would have caught the drift of it better if the pilgrims had been making a voyage.'

'Yes,' said Ida; 'when he came to the place where Hopeful pulls the key out of his bosom which will open every door in Doubting Castle, Jack shouted,—

'"Hurrah, my hearties! Lift your anchors! Clap on all sail! Scud along, while the grinning old grampus has the cramp in his joints!"'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Uncle Charlie; 'trust a sailor to side with the weaker party. Queen Mab, what do *you* say to "Bye-path Meadow"?

'Better keep on the King's highway, Uncle Charlie.'

'Right, my beauty. Fix your compass, get your bearings, and then steer straight away for port. Master Tom gave us a stave just now, so I 'll give another.'

THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

WHEREVER you may be,
Whatever you may see,
That would lead you into evil, say you, 'Nay!
I will not turn aside.'
Whatever may betide,
Keep along the middle of the King's highway.

The meadows may be green
Where Bye-path stile is seen;
'Turn aside a little,' every flower seems to say;
Be sure you take no heed,
They're trying to mislead;
Keep along the middle of the King's highway.

For on enchanted ground
There's danger all around;
And a thousand pleasant voices bid you stay.
With fingers stop your ears,
And never mind their jeers;
Keep along the middle of the King's highway.

Our God will guide us right,
And, walking in the light,
We shall win a crown of glory in the day
When Jesus calls His own,
To gather round His throne,
Who kept along the middle of the King's highway.

'There goes a hare!' said Harry. 'See how she runs!'

Irrepressible Tom spied his chance. Pointing to scampering puss, 'Why is that hare,' quoth he, 'like a Dutchman?'

'Give it up,' said Uncle Charlie, 'as the dog did the hedgehog.'

'Why, because it 's a *fur runner;* don't you see?'

'Please to spare our feelings, cruel boy,' said Marion; but Frank, unwilling to be left out in the cold, kept the game up, for seeing the sportsman from whom the poor animal was scudding away, he cried,—

'Harry, why is that hare like the Shah?'

Harry was thrown off the scent by the mention of the Persian monarch, so Frank responded,—

'Why, because he 's *foe-runner* to be sure.'

Spying Queen Mab cantering on ahead of the party, Harry responded,—

'Why is Mabel like all three, the hare, the Dutchman, and the Shah?'

All of them were nonplussed until Harry answered his own conundrum, by saying,

'Because she 's a *fore-runner.*'

So amid laughter and glee they came in sight of Branksome Mere, a spacious lake, now mailed in ice and covered with a coating of powdered snow. Fringed on the one side with silver beech, bush, sedge, and willows, and on the other by the beetling rocks of Branksome Edge and the hoary trees of Branksome wood, it was a scene of sylvan beauty and delight.

Black Bo's'un was already on the ice, keeping charge over a parcel of skates and a well-filled luncheon basket. Poor Quaco was well wrapped; still he was compelled to resort to an impromptu dance upon the ice to warm his toes. Our little party heard him singing to his dance, and quietly paused to hear the chant of the unsuspecting negro. Quaco's was a queer ditty, partly picked up on the sugar plantation, partly twisted to meet the experiences of brighter days:—

One time I had a massa,
A buckra man for massa,
An' he sarve me bad, when buckra man got me;

Now I 've another massa,
God bress dis oder massa,
For he help a poor black nigger, and den he set 'im free.

An' I 'se got anudder Massa.
Oh, praise de Lord for Massa,
De deah Massa Jesus dat died upon the tree;
I 'se love Massa Cap'n Charlie,
I 'se love Massa Cap'n Jesus,
For dey loves de poor black nigger, and den dey set 'im free.

'Ahem! ahem!' coughed Uncle Charlie loudly, and Quaco's song was hushed in a moment as he turned to pick up skates and luncheon basket, and to prepare the skates for the coming frolic on the ice. Then, off and away went the frolicsome juveniles, cutting all sorts of figures on the crystal pavement, and all the letters of the alphabet; darting off like an arrow to the utmost limit of the lake, and all the while keeping awake the echoes of Branksome Wood with their noisy mirth.

Mabel, not yet equal to skating without assistance, and waiting the arrival of Sailor Jack, who was coming to give her a lesson, and guide her across the ice, passed the time in teaching Bo's'un how to slide. It was a sight for a painter, for poor Quaco's dread of falling made him go so gingerly, while his honest desire to please his instructress made him so dangerously fussy, that he cut a most ludicrous figure. His legs were wide apart, and his arms extended like an animated cross; his arms ever anon flying like the sails of a windmill, and his legs as shaky as those of a tipsy rope-dancer. Now he squatted down on his thighs and toppled over on the powdery snow; and every now and then he suddenly sat down with a thump on the ice, with a 'Golly, Miss Mabel! wasn't dat a cracker?' Now shouting 'Hi! hi!' in his fear of falling, and now crying, 'Clar de way, dere! Dis nigger comin' 'long like an ingin!' And then showing his white teeth as he broke into peals of laughter. Queen Mab laughed all the while until the tears came into her eyes, and Uncle Charlie grew so red in the face with loud

explosions, that he had to hold his sides and beg her majesty to have a little mercy on him!

When the pleasant winter sun marked the hour of noon Sailor Jack came upon the scene with more provisions, for such exercise as this sharpens youthful appetites. But, as the honest sailor put it, here was 'plenty of junk and a full bunker' all round. A good supply of 'grog' was soon provided by the handy tar, who made a fire on the shore, boiled some water, and made a jorum of hot coffee.

'Ship ahoy!—ship ahoy!' shouted Uncle Charlie, with his hands to his mouth like a speaking-trumpet. Through the crisp, clear air his dinner-call sounded over the lake, and rang round the corner of Branksome Edge into the ears of the merry skaters, who turned about and, joining hands, bore down at express speed towards the blazing fire and the welcome fare.

'Hi! look a dere, Sailor Jack!' said Bo's'un; 'isn't dat *comproperous?*'

What he meant by that wonderful word was well understood by Sailor Jack, who responded:

'Bless their happy faces! A finer fleet of frigates never carried bunting. Hurrah, my hearties! Drop your anchor under the victualling store, and stow your cargo for another voyage!'

The 'stowing' business went on at an alarming rate, and it was not until they were pretty well laden that anybody had time to talk. So Sailor Jack was induced to spin a yarn by way of dinner music.

'Why,' said Jack, 'mine's not much of a yarn, ladies and gentlemen all, but I'll spin a short hank till the cargo's home and the anchor hove.'

"You must let it be something about ice, Sailor Jack,' said Miss Mabel.

'And then it's sure to be a *nice* story,' said the irrepressible Tom.

'Ice it shall be, my hearties, and plenty of it, and no mistake,' said Sailor Jack; and forthwith related the following story.

FAST IN THE ICE.

'TWENTY years ago this winter I shipped on board a Greenland whaler called the *Marmion*. She was a queer sort of a tub, and rolled about in the water like a porpoise on the spree. The skipper, Captain Tasker, was an old weather-tanned salt, with a nose like a pottle of strawberries through being so desperate partial to his grog. His face was as blue as the British flag; and as his nose was red and his big teeth with never a gap in them were as white as a nigger's, we used to call him "Old Union Jack," and sometimes "Old Red, White, and Blue." He had a temper like a prairie hurricane, especially when he had been making too free with the bottle, and then it was a caution to come near him. He was a wonderful good seaman, however, and handled the *Marmion* as easily as a recruiting sergeant handles his cane. Our fishing-ground was far away north, where only a few of the boldest skippers venture to go. We had uncommon bad luck, and nearly at the end of the season, instead of a cargo of oil, we had as many empty barrels as would have made a raft for the *Marmion* to float home on. Captain Tasker's temper grew worse by bad luck, and he and the grog bottle could never part company. If anybody said anything about danger or turning back, he flew into a passion, and swore he would sail "right up to the North Pole and hang his hat on it." At last we got so far into the region of icebergs, that they grew as thick as trees in a Norway pine forest, and cruising was as dangerous as going in and out among a fleet of hulks with no rudders to 'em. Some of 'em were as high as half-a-dozen churches piled one on the top o' t' other, and as broad as a county jail; and when the weather was bad, the way they rushed about and lunged and toppled over would have frightened the bravest. Then the ice collected round the ship, and we got fairly frozen in. The old skipper began to come to his senses now; but there seemed nothing for us but to stay there and be starved to death. While we were in this fix, and were fast losing all heart, a tremendous storm rose; the ice cracked right and left, and we saw two mountains of solid

ice bearing down on us on either side. Carried by different currents, they came rushing along, crushing up the ice all round us, and making a noise like a thousand cannons all let off at once. Right in front was a big ice-floe, covering an acre of sea. The captain saw it moving south, ordered two stout anchors to be flung among the rough hummocks on the top of it, and at once we were towed away at a tremendous rate. When we were fairly out of danger, the monster bergs came clashing together with such a force that the horrible clang stunned and deafened every ear. Had we been a few minutes later, the old *Marmion* would have been crumpled like a match-box, and every soul on board her would have gone to Davy Jones. Once fairly out of the ice, we hove in the anchors, and, with a fair wind, made sail, and reached Lerwick harbour in the Shetland Isles, thankful to Providence, which had come to our help when we were "Fast in the Ice."'

After lunch was over, the children again dispersed over the ice, and had a fine time of it, until Uncle Charlie prudently gathered his young wards together; and before the chill mists of evening began to fall, the ponies' hoofs were again ringing over the frozen snow, as the little party pursued their homeward way.

THE TENTH HOUR.

RHYME AND REASON.

CAPSTAN CABIN seemed to be more than usually cheery after the breezy pleasures on Branksome Mere; and as the children were all somewhat tired with the day's exercise, Uncle Charlie undertook to do the story-telling.

'Well, my bairns,' quoth he, 'you have done wonders with your skates; but I can tell you a skating story that's a bigger wonder still. Here goes!'

And the eager children, always sure of something good from Uncle Charlie, dropped into their places round the cheerful beech-wood fire, and listened to the story of

THE MAGIC SKATES.

AT Gammerton Grange lived young Gregory Green,
A dapper young farmer as ever was seen,
His land and his cattle, his stacks and his store,
Were fertile and fruitful and many and more.

Just one thing was needed to gladden his life
Young Gregory Green was in want of a wife.
Of maidens who might have been won was no lack;
Full fifty were ready, with gear at their back.

For these and for others no jot did he care,
His heart it was set upon Susan St. Clair.

Miss Susan was handsome and clever and kind;
Miss Susan was wary, to caution inclined:

For all those who marry, Miss Susan well knew,
Tie knots with their tongues which no teeth can undo;
And soon the young lady was able to glean
Bad habits were growing on Gregory Green.

Young Gregory Green was too fond of his glass,
The bar of the *Griffin* he seldom could pass.
He toddied, he tippled, he toasted, and tossed,
Full oft was the line of intemperance crossed.

So Susan St. Clair, with the air of a queen,
Said 'No' to the wooing of Gregory Green.
Poor Gregory descended from badly to worse,
Grew poorer in chattels and straitened in purse.

Cramped, pestered, and hampered, he found with alarm
That bailiffs were threatening to seize on his farm,
Now Gregory had fifty fat wethers to spare;
Away he went with them to Fullerton Fair.

He soon made a bargain with Daniel Dean,
Who three hundred pounds paid to Gregory Green.
The bargain was sealed with a glass of the best,
And poor Gregory drank with a ruinous zest.

He staggered and stumbled through Fullerton Fair,
Where a travelling pedlar was pushing his ware.
On the front of his cart, with his show at his back,
Stood Benjamin Brigham, a noted 'cheap-jack.'

Amid jests and jocosities, quiddities, quips,
His wares left his fingers as jokes left his lips.
So cheaply he chaffered, so charming his chat,
Folks purchased before they knew what they were at.

Quoth pedlar to people, 'Attention, my mates!
I 've a prize for the best of you. Look at these skates!
Light, handy, and cheap, too. I vow and declare
These are Magical Skates. Who 'll bid for the pair?

'They can skim like a swallow, glide like a boat,
Will run from the bailiffs and never be caught.
Now's your chance, and the like of it never was seen.'
'Half a gui-gui-guinea!' said Gregory Green.

'They're yours,' said the pedlar. 'But mind what you do;'
For he saw the poor farmer was something askew.
'If you buckle them on under spirits or beer,
The spirit that's in them grows crusty and queer.

'Don't touch ardent spirits,
or may be, good lack!
You'll skate into moon-
shine, and never come
back!'
The crowd around laughed
at the capital joke,
Said Gregory Green, 'No
mo-more of your talk.

'All right, Ch-cheap-
Jack! You're a son of
a gun.
The Ma-magical Skates
are now all my own.
Spi-spirits or no spirits,
it'll be strange
If I do not ska-ate to Gam-
merton Grange.

'The river is frozen, the ice will be-bear,
And I shall skate home from Fullerton Fair.'
Making off with his bargain, with devious gait,
Poor gumptionless Gregory went to his fate.

The skates in his pockets, no fear in his breast,
In his noddle the whisky, the gold in his vest,
He arrived at the river, and challenged the fates
By donning his newly-bought Magical Skates.

He soon staggered and reeled on the treacherous track,
And at last our bold skater fell flat on his back.
He groaned and he kicked like a cow in a bog,
He wriggled and grumbled and sprawled like a frog.

But he couldn't arise any more than a sheep;
So he lapsed into quiet and then into sleep.
Now Benjamin Brigham, our witty 'cheap-jack,'
Had a notion that Gregory hadn't the knack

To go safe to Gammerton, much less to skate,
In his whiskyfied, beeryfied, blundering state;
So the good-humoured Benjamin followed with speed,
And found Mr. Green very helpless indeed.

And out on the ice lay the glittering gold,
For which all the fifty fat wethers were sold.
With a smile on his face and a gleam in his eye,
Ben gathered the money and hid it close by,

In a secret nook, near a footbridge of plank,
And there 't was invested as safe as the bank.
The pedlar roused Gregory by shaking and shout;
A long time it took him to bring him about.

But thanks to the skill and the patience of Benj.,
Poor Gregory came safely to Gammerton Grange.
In the morn the poor farmer exclaimed with a groan,
'Alack and alas! all my money is gone!'

So quickly to Fullerton hastening back,
Soon he in the market-place met with 'Cheap Jack.'
'Your skates have played me a fine trick,' said young Green.
'Better skates than the magic ones never were seen.

'I 've heard no complaints of them all through my rounds.'
'No matter. They've lost me some hundreds of pounds.'
'Ha, ha!' said Ben Brigham; 'you forgot what I said;
They are sure to play false, Sir, if drink 's in the head.

'Cheer up, Mr. Farmer! You're sober to-day:
The skates by their magic may show you the way
To discover the money they helped you to lose;
So put them on sober, they 'll bring you good news.

''T was the whisky, believe me, that brought you to grief;
They 'll find out the money and track down the thief!'
Persuaded by Benjamin, home straight did he go;
A drowning man eagerly catches a straw.

Again did he buckle the skates on his feet,
To see if good fortune his efforts would meet;
And nearing once more the light foot-bridge of plank
(The place where the money lay safe as the bank),

Cheap Jack stood upon it, and said, with a laugh,
'I told you the truth, though you thought it was chaff.
The skates are conducting you straight to the thief,
It's as true as the daylight, though hard of belief.

'Turn your feet to this side, Sir, and skate to the shore!'
When, lo and behold! there! The whole of his store
Lay glittering and smiling at Gregory Green;
Of wonders the greatest that ever was seen!

'Now, I'm safe from the bailiffs,' cried Gregory then;
'I'll swear that I'll never touch whisky again.'
'That's right,' said the pedlar; 'without any doubt,
The only safe side for the liquor is out;

'When it enters the stomach it enters the head.
Depend on it, farmer, that all I have said
Is true of all skates, boots, stockings, and shoes;
There 's magic in all of them, if we but use

'Our own sober senses, and hold it a sin
To befuddle the reason with whisky and gin.
I sought you, I found you; you laid on the ice,
And, but for my coming, were dead in a trice.

'I gathered your money and hid it with care,
Conducted you homeward, and landed you there.
For all I have done, I 'm rewarded to-day;
You 're welcome as ever were flowers in May.

'Strong drink is a mocker; let us leave it alone;
It blasts and it curses wherever 't is known.'
Young Gregory Green shook hands with the thief;
From that hour the farmer turned o'er a new leaf.

His credit, his character, rose like a charm;
Prosperity, plenty, were seen at the farm.
Again he went wooing, now winning his wife,
And Susan became the dear prize of his life.

No finer young couple is found anywhere
Than the dapper young farmer and Susan St. Clair;
And Gregory Green all his happiness dates
From the aid of 'Cheap Jack' and the 'Magical Skates.'

Uncle Charlie repeated the rattling story with much gusto. Loud laughter was raised at the expense of Gregory Green, and a round of hearty applause was given for Benjamin Brigham, the honest and thoughtful Cheap Jack.

'Hallo, Queen Mab!' quoth the merry Captain, patting her flushed and healthy cheek, 'who 's been painting your figure-head for you? You are as rosy as the breast of a robin.'

'Jack Frost did it, Uncle Charlie,' said Mabel, 'on Branksome Mere.'

'She gathered her roses in a garden of ice,' said the poetical Tom.

'And carried them home without money or price,' said merry Maid Marion.

'And they 're making her majesty look very nice,' followed up Frank.

'Don't flatter her, Frank, for that is a vice,' quoth Master Harry.

'You cannot do that; she's all sugar and spice,' said sister Ida.

'Sister Ida! of flattery that's a good slice,' laughingly said Queen Mab.

'Stow that! Overhaul the log in a trice,' wound up Uncle Charlie; and so the rhymes without reason were stopped for a season, for it would be treason not to obey the genial Captain of Capstan Cabin. Harry produced the Budget, and brought out a piece of paper containing a charade.

Master Tom blushed up to the ears, and Uncle Charlie said:

'Hallo, Master Tom! I suspect you 've been stowing away a little cargo of your own, with a view to a bit of smuggling.'

Tom owned that he had put the paper there, saying:

'O yes, I 'm a smuggler bold,
And placed my cargo in the hold;
These are the goods that here you see,
I hope you 'll pass them "duty free."'

'That depends, you young outlaw; Capstan Cabin is no place for contraband traffic.'

'Well, it really is home produce,' said Tom. 'I've made it out of my own head, as the carpenter said of the wig block.'

'TURN HIM OUT.'

WHO hasn't *my first*, I should like to know,
In this blundering world of ours?
To get rid of it altogether, I trow,
Is far beyond human powers.

To look for it some folks are often inclined;
My second is sure to discover it;
And often will show an ungenerous mind
By meanly exulting over it.

Then, *my second's* my whole, and a general pest,
We all should be better without him.
My first he oft sees where it isn't possessed,
And all sensible people will scout him.

If he 'd listen to me I would say, with a frown,
'*My second*, pray be to yourself;
You 'll discover *my first* is a thing of your own;
Go and mend *it*, you grumbling elf.'

'Hallo, Master Riddle-ma-ree,' said Uncle Charlie, 'you have got into queer company this time, and no mistake. I 've a notion that I know the fellow you are driving at. His room 's better than his company any day. All decent craft will give him a wide berth, and tell him to keep his oar to himself and paddle his own canoe, either to Hexham, Coventry, Jericho, or Bath. He belongs to a class of folks that are just like wasps, centipedes, and musquitoes: downright nuisances, that need stamping out. To-morrow night we 'll take his mask off, and then we 'll turn him out.'

'Uncle,' said little Curly-head, 'I've been making a riddle; may I read it?'

'Aye, aye, Miss Fairy,' said Uncle Charlie; 'but bring us a better messmate, or Capstan Cabin will need some disinfecting powder or Condy's fluid.'

My *first* and my *next* and my *whole*,
Are all of them pleasant to eat;
My *first* is a fruit, and my *second* is baked,
And my *whole* is good for a treat.

'Well done, Mabel,' said Uncle Charlie; 'that takes the taste of the "grumbling elf" out of one's mouth. I propose that we all try our hands at an answer in rhyme to Mabel's riddle; and whoever writes the best shall have my whole for a treat, whatever it is.'

This was willingly agreed to, and after a few verses of the 'Evening Hymn' had been sung, the youthful party bade Uncle Charlie 'good night.'

THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

A SLICE OF CAKE.

THAT bluff commander, Captain Charlie, and his cheery crew gathered round the fire in Capstan Cabin once again. Outside, the winter wind and rain were beating hard against the window-panes, a sound which made the cosy old room look cosier still by contrast.

'Now, Miss Ida,' quoth the Skipper, 'kindly unmask Tom's "grumbler," and let us get rid of him.'

Hereupon that young damsel read her answer to Master Tom's charade, as follows:

'A *fault* no living man 's without,
And never lacks a *finder;*
Than *fault-finders*, without a doubt,
There is no class unkinder.

'Our faults, however, may be cured;
Our duty is to mend them;
We should be finders of our own,
And do our best to end them.'

'Hear, hear! Bravo! That 's the way to manage 'em,' said Uncle Charlie. '"Of my own faults be a mender," and of others' faults be tender. As for the fault-finders, pack 'em off to No Man's Land, with a free passage and no return ticket, and

to 'em start a colony of their own. I'll warrant they'll have a lively time of it, and will *gimlet* each other's failings till they are all bored to death.'

'Ha, ha! Uncle Charlie; that's a pun,' was the general cry.

'Don't be *fault-finders*.' And under cover of that retort Uncle Charlie escaped the punishment due to his misdeeds. 'Now for Queen Mab's riddle. Let us see who has brought the best answer and won the prize,—

HARRY.

Said Peter *Plum* to Clara *Cake*,
'Me for a husband will you take?'
'With all my heart,' the lady said.
So Plum and Cake at once were wed.

MARION.

O fair *plum cake!* How shall I tell
The virtues that in thee do dwell?
For this I know, and know full well,
Thou 'rt sweet to eat and nice to smell.
O that thy precious charms were mine;
Then come, and be my valentine.

FRANK.

If I should get the prize, Miss Mabel,
I 'll put the *plum cake* on the table.
But if by chance it comes to thee,
In thy success remember me.
I give to all the same advice;
Then come what will, I get a slice.

IDA.

Miss Mabel, I 'm able,
To answer with ease;
You've put it, I 'll cut it,
The *plum cake*, please!'

TOM.

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating his Christmas *plum cake;*
He put in his thumb and pulled out a plum,
And said, 'O what a man I shall make!'

MABEL.

You 've answered my riddle,
Both ends and the middle,
You 've made it as plain as the moon;
And little Mab laughed
To see the sport,
And we 'll cut the *plum cake* with a spoon.

'Which is best?' was a question more easily asked than answered. At last it was resolved to vote the prize to Queen Mab, who, as the author of the riddle, had a better claim than any of the rest; but we may be very certain that when the cake was forthcoming, everybody was welcome to 'cut and come again.' This important matter being settled, Uncle Charlie called out for the 'log.' Once more the exhaustless Budget was produced, and the prize-winner of the evening, Queen Mab, read the following beautiful little story.

THE RAINDROP AND THE SPARK.

A BRIGHT little spark fell by the side of a hayrick, saying, 'Now I 'll make a blaze!'

Just at that instant a raindrop fell and rested a moment on the tip of a blade of grass. 'If you do,' said the raindrop, 'I 'll put you out.'

'Mind your own business,' said the spark; 'why should you interfere?'

'It *is* my own business,' said the raindrop; 'for I live for the good of others.'

'What has that to do with it?' said the spark pertly, for he had a hot temper. 'I can burn the hayrick if I like, I suppose.'

'No, you can't,' was the answer; 'for then the horses would have to go without fodder. and there would be no hay for the sheep in winter.'

'But you have neither horses nor sheep,' said the spark.

'No, but others have; and we ought to find our pleasure in serving them,' said the drop, indignant at such selfish talk.

'Would you like to put me out?' said the spark, after a little pause.

'Not if you'll be quiet and do no harm. I would rather drop into that violet by your side, and make it bright and beautiful for the young lady to see who is coming this way. That would give pleasure to three, you see: the violet, the lady, and myself; and that's something worth living for.'

'Very well,' said the spark. 'If I burn the hayrick, that will be beautiful too, and make a grander sight than the violet.'

'Yes,' said the raindrop; 'but it would rob the owner, hunger the cattle, and do good to nobody. Beauty in mischief is worse than no beauty at all.'

'But,' said the spark, 'I have no other way of making myself a name.'

'Better die without a name than have a bad one,' said the raindrop; 'you can at least be good if you can't be great.'

'Stop your preaching,' said the spark; 'I'll make a blaze.'

'Then I shall put you out!' quoth the raindrop.

'You had better not; for I shall put *you* out if you do.'

'I know,' said the drop, 'that I shall perish in the struggle; but I shall prevent harm, and die in doing my duty.'

The spark burnt with passion, and leaped towards the rick; but the raindrop managed to shake itself from the blade of grass to which it hung, and dropping on the spark put it out for ever, and by its own act of self sacrifice the pearly drop dried up in a moment. By-and-by the lady stopped to look at the little violet, which drooped quite pensive and sad.

'Poor little violet!' said she; 'what makes you so sad and sorrowful?'

'A little jewel of a raindrop,' said the fragrant flower, 'came all the way from the clouds to cheer me, but seeing a spark just about to burn the hayrick, it dropped itself upon the wicked

little mischief-maker, and cheerfully died for the good of others.'

'O, how very sad!' said the lady.

'But,' continued the violet, 'though the raindrop thought she would be lost for ever, the sun sent down a golden beam, which carried away my beautiful friend, remoulded her in a more charming form, and placed her in yonder rainbow round about his throne.'

The lady smiled as she fetched a broad leaf full of water from a rippling stream; then sprinkling the refreshing drops on the drooping flower, she said,—

'Yes, goodness and love cannot die, they are immortal. He that loseth his life, the same shall find it. The best and purest Life of all was spent in doing good, and died to show His love; and all who tread in His footsteps shall one day be spanned with Him by the emerald rainbow round about the throne.'

'O, how very beautiful!' said the little party when Mabel had concluded her pretty parable.

'Yes,' said Uncle Charlie; 'the raindrop, the violet, and the lady were all beautiful, for they were all good. I am sorry to say that such little sparks of mischief are kindled sadly too often. You and I, my darlings, will always do the best we can to put them out. I should like to write an epitaph on that little raindrop.

Doing its duty, this little one died;
Doing its duty, whate'er might betide;
Living for others, its love to display;
Dying for others, it vanished away.
Living and loving, whate'er it might cost,
Willing that life should in serving be lost;
Faithfully doing its Maker's behest,
Then rising, beautiful, blessing, and blest.
Living a life bright with duty and love,
It rose to the glory of heaven above.

It was now Master Frank's turn to take a dip in the Budget,

and in a few moments he followed up Mabel's parable with a short but capital little story, which was a fitting sequel and told a similar lesson.

THE BURNT BOOKS.

In the city of New York there lived a tradesman whose name was Henniker. He was prosperous in business, though at the time of which I speak his resources were small and his stock was very limited in extent. He was an exceedingly charitable man, and whatever time he could spare from his business as a bookseller, he employed in visiting the sick and poor. Many a poor body was aided by his open purse, comforted by his cheery words, and aided by his counsel and his prayers.

Through the influence of a friend in Scotland he was made the American agent for the sale of the celebrated *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, which had just been published; an extensive and expensive work, which soon rose to very great popularity, and had a remarkably rapid sale. A large consignment of the costly volumes were sent over to him, and these were laid in a large room just over his store.

One day a poor fellow entered his shop, meanly and even

shabbily attired, and bearing on his face evident traces of suffering and weakness.

'Can you give me a job?' said he; 'will you give me something to do?'

There was such a look and a tone of entreaty connected with the question, that Mr. Henniker was very sorry to have to say,—

'No, my good fellow. There is nothing about my place but what I and my assistant can manage. Besides, you look as though you have not much strength for work.'

The man's eyes filled with tears as he said, 'Well, I'm not equal to hard work; but would to God that I could find a little to do, to buy bread!'

The kind-hearted bookseller, as usual, melted with pity, began to cast about and see if he couldn't *make* a little work, so that the man who did not beg might earn an honest loaf.

'Follow me,' said he suddenly; and so saying, he led him up to the room above where the volumes of the *Encyclopædia* were lying in confused piles upon the floor. 'There!' said he; 'you can pile these volumes up neatly in rows. It will give you a little money for bread, as you say.'

The poor fellow thanked him heartily, and at once went down on his knees and set about his work. It took him a long time to do, and when it was completed Mr. Henniker gave him a couple of dollars, and sent him away rejoicing.

A few days afterwards a fire broke out on the bookseller's premises, and his entire stock upstairs and down was utterly destroyed. He had taken the wise precaution to insure the shop and the stock, but the loss he suffered in connection with the *Encyclopædias* was so large, that the insurance office disputed his claim, and refused to pay. This was so serious a blow, that Mr. Henniker was reduced to very great straits indeed, and absolute bankruptcy stared him in the face.

During these days of trouble, he went about his visits among the sick and poor as usual; for though he had nothing to give them in the way of money, his godly counsel and cheery comfort were gratefully received; and though his own heart was sore, he smoothed many a dying pillow and poured the balm of religion into many a penitent heart.

THE TWELFTH HOUR.

A BRUSH WITH PIRATES.

'MY bark is on the sea, and the wind blows fair,' sang Uncle Charlie, as, with trusty blackthorn stick in hand, he trudged along the Middlethorpe Road on his return from a visit to his pensioners in Middlethorpe Major. He was not aware that three young damsels were lying in wait for him by the foot-path which crossed the Sedgeley meadows, and with a light heart, such as most people have who have been doing deeds of kindness, he was chanting a favourite sea song,—

'My bark is on the sea, and the wind blows fair;——'

'*You'll be boarded by the pirates if you don't take care,*'

shouted 'merry Maid Marion,' as the three girls rushed out of their hiding place and surrounded him.

'Hard-a-port, you sea-sharks, if you wouldn't have your bows stove in! Hard-a-port, or I 'll scuttle you! These waters are so infested with red rovers, that I shall have to tie a broom to my mast-head, as the Dutch admiral did, and sweep the seas of 'em.'

Taken in tow, however, by the victorious fleet, the captured vessel was hauled along, while the laughing trio demanded that he should continue his song. Nothing loth, Uncle Charlie, hoping perhaps to get better terms from the cruel hands into which he had fallen, struck up again,—

'My bark is on the sea, and the wind blows fair;
My sails are flowing free, and my heart is free from care;
And though my bonny bark may be by billows tossed,
She 's a light and floating ark, and the ocean will be crossed!
She will bound along the waters like a sea-gull in the air——'

'*She is bound for Capstan Cabin, and she will soon be there,*'

shouted that young sinner Tom, as he and his two brothers suddenly bounded from the Manor House gate and stopped the startled skipper in full career.

'Avast there, you young buccaneers! You swarm in these seas so, that there is no room for honest craft. I 'll make you "walk the plank," as the navvy said to the wheelbarrow. So amid laughter and mirth the port was gained, and in due time the youthful party gathered round the hearth in Capstan Cabin, and the beech logs, blazing merrily, lit up the ingle nook where Uncle Charlie had taken his accustomed seat.

Queen Mab's curly head was again gleaming in the firelight by her uncle's knee, and by Harry's side lay the green baize Budget, ready to yield its treasures at command.

'Overhaul the log!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Now, Miss Ida, it 's your turn.'

'Uncle,' said the conundrumical Tom, 'why is Ida like a man going to bathe?'

'Because she 's about to take a dip, Mr. Clever. Now, why are you like a schoolboy when his sum comes right?'

'Because I have got my answer, I suppose,' said Tom.

'Right you are. Now, Ida, go to work.'

That young lady took a 'dip' in the Budget, and brought out the following story:—

HOW A BEETLE SAVED A PRINCE.

ONCE upon a time——

'O, that 's nice,' quoth little Queen Mab; 'all the best stories begin in that way.'

Once upon a time, repeated Ida with a smile, there was an Eastern prince who had offended the king his uncle, so he

One day he visited a poor man, who was lying on a bed of sickness. After he had spoken to him a little while, the man said,—

'Why, you are the gentleman who kindly gave me the job of piling up those big books.'

Mr. Henniker told him of the trouble that had come upon him, and eagerly asked him if he had any recollection of the number of books he had handled.

'Yes,' said the man; 'I can tell you exactly;' and at once he produced a piece of coarse paper on which he had marked down the number of rows he had piled and the number of volumes in each row.

The precious paper and the evidence of the sick man were at once laid before the insurance company, and Mr. Henniker's demand was forthwith paid in full, and all his troubles passed away like a morning cloud.

As soon as the man recovered, he found employment and prosperity through the influence of the grateful bookseller, who had given him work to get him bread.

'Aye, aye,' said Uncle Charlie, when the little story was concluded; 'kindness is good seed, and is sure to bring a harvest. While the man was piling books, the bookseller was piling blessings, and laying up a store of wealth that no fire, however big, could burn. He who gives, gets; and he who has a kindly care for others will ever find that God has a kindly care for him. The good man little knew when he spent a dollar to feed a hungry man that some day the hungry man would be the means of bringing many a thousand dollars back. Frank, my boy, what does the good Book say of godly ventures of that sort?'

The old Bible was brought out, and the old man read,—

'*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

'*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*'

With these high thoughts of love and kindness, of charity and duty lingering in their youthful minds, our young friends took their nightly leave of kind and tender-hearted Uncle Charlie, and Capstan Cabin was once more emptied of its guests.

take advice from old folks, for the maiden was well counselled by the old hermit.'

'Well spoken, middy. Years should teach wisdom, and good boys will listen to greybeards. Now, Miss Marion, give us your opinion.'

'I think,' said Marion, 'it teaches the value of contrivance, and shows what may be done by a little wit in finding a way out of a difficulty.'

'Very well said, sweetheart. That's the lesson taught by the fable of the "Crow and the Pitcher." If you can't do a thing one way, try another. Master Frank, what say you?'

'I think the story shows how everybody has to depend on everybody, and that none of us can do without our neighbours. The prince had to depend on the maiden, the maiden on the hermit, and even the beetle could not be spared.'

'Very true, Master Frank. The peer would get on very badly without the ploughboy, and we could not enjoy this cosy fire without the collier and the chimney sweep. That's the idea of true brotherhood. Now, Miss Ida, point your moral.'

'Well,' said Ida, 'I think it teaches the value of perseverance; for by creeping and keeping at it the beetle reached the top, though I am sorry he found no honey when he got there; he certainly deserved it.'

'That he did,' said Uncle Charlie; 'and your moral is very sound; for "at it and keeping at it" is the way to reach the top of any tower that duty bids us climb. Now, Master Tom, squeeze another drop of honey out of Ida's capital story.'

'I think it may well teach that a small fault, like a small thread, may one day become a strong rope that can't be broken; and also that a feeble effort to do right, if constantly carried out, may end in strong principle and power for good.'

'Hear, hear, my boy! If we suffer ourselves to go wrong, it may become a habit so strong that we cannot break it; and good beginnings, however feeble, make a man as strong as Samson in the end. Queen Mab, what have you to say?'

'Well, Uncle Charlie, I think it teaches that the littlest of us may be very useful, and that however small we are, we may do big things, for after all, it was a little beetle that saved the prince.'

'Bless your little majesty's heart, that's as clear as daylight,' said Uncle Charlie. 'Little seeds bring great harvests, little strokes fell great oaks, and the mouse in the fable set the lion free. I was once in an English dockyard when they were trying to launch a big ship. A big crowd had come to see the ship glide down the slides that were to carry it to the sea. The blocks and wedges were knocked away. But the big hull wouldn't stir a peg. Just then a little chap about ten years old ran forward and gave a sudden push. The crowd laughed to see him, but that bit of a push was just the extra force required, and in a moment the monster vessel sailed grandly into the water. "I launched the ship!" the little fellow shouted, and all the people cheered and laughed as he strode proudly back. Yes, littles are mighty things sometimes.'

'Now, Uncle Charlie,' said the children in chorus, 'what moral can you get out of the story?'

'Why, this, my bairns,' said the old man solemnly. 'The poor beetle may well teach us how Satan tempts us by sweet and lying promises to seek for pleasure and happiness where they can't be found. Poor foolish mortals find that "the honey" is all a delusion, when it's too late to untie the thread that binds them to his will. Let my precious bairns remember that all the devil's promises are lies. However bright and sweet may seem the prize he offers, be sure you will never get it. So let us give him and his temptations a wide berth, and look for happiness to God. If we climb Christward and heavenward, we shall one day find that in His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for ever more.'

Now it was Uncle Charlie's turn at the 'log.' Instead of 'dipping,' however, he told them the following story.

A CURE FOR BAD TEMPER.

FRANK HORSLEY was a fine, sharp lad, with a sharp temper that wasn't fine at all. On the contrary, when one of his hot fits came over him, it spoilt his face and made him look as though he had eaten a sour gooseberry steeped in vinegar. It spoiled

his pleasure, and made him feel as uncomfortable as if he had swallowed a hot potato with the skin on, and it made his brothers and sisters feel as much at home with him as a bluebottle in a bee-hive or a mouse in a drum. When his passion cooled down a bit, Frank was heartily ashamed of himself, and could have given himself a good horsewhipping, if he could have stood far enough off to do it; for he wasn't at all a bad sort of fellow when he held the upper hand on his temper and kept within decent bounds.

His father and his mother, too, had often reproved him, had sometimes punished him, and Frank was always sorry. In answer to their strong entreaties that he would curb his temper, he used to say 'I'll try.' For a while things would go smoothly enough, until he got a little extra put out; and then he would flare up like a tar-barrel, fizz like a squib, and then go off like a cracker on the fifth of November. His tongue would run with a whizz, like a wound-up watch when the mainspring breaks; he would stamp his feet on the ground as though he was crushing black beetles for a wager; and his arms would fly about like the sails of a windmill in a stiff nor-wester. Then when all was over, and common-sense came back, he would say, 'What a *hass I ham!*' for his anger at his own folly made him forget his grammar. 'I will try to master my abominable temper; see if I don't!' Then, perhaps, he would go for weeks together, walking, talking, and acting like a gentleman, until, in an unguarded moment, he would explode like a barrel of yeast, and be as great a simpleton and as big a nuisance as ever.

One day he was out in the farmyard, for his father was a farmer, and he saw a proud and stately cock suddenly run at another cock, which flew at once into as great a passion, and then flew at the other. At it they went with spurs and beaks until the feathers flew also, and it seemed as though, in their hot-headed rage, they would tear each other to pieces. They ran this way and that way, backwards and forwards, sideways and round, until, mad and blind and reckless, they both soused head over heels into the horsepond. They flapped and struggled and cackled and spluttered until they got on to dry land again. Draggled and drenched and dripping, they looked for all the world like two scarecrows after three days' rain, and Frank

couldn't help laughing until his sides ached at the comical and pitiful figure the two warriors cut. But, bless you! the battle was over. They were both as cool as the water of the horse-pond, and quite as muddy. Turning each away from the other, the shivering simpletons set to work to shake themselves and make themselves presentable to their families, who would certainly have run away at the sight of such hobgoblins as they were.

A few days afterwards Frank was playing with his brothers at the very same place. One of them vexed him; off he went in a towering rage; he began to stamp and sputter, and rushing on his brother Tom, he was about to let fly at him with his wicked little fist. Suddenly the muddy water of the horsepond caught his eye, the figure of the half-drowned cocks rose up before his mind; he burst into a fit of laughter. 'Frank,' said he, addressing himself, 'if ever you are such a *hass* again, I'll duck *you*, as sure as you are born! Shake hands, Tom; I'm sorry.' Tom was thunderstruck, owned his fault, and the brothers were at peace. Tom seemed, and so did the rest, to be more obliging than ever; but I think the change was mostly in Frank, who from that day to this has striven against his besetting sin, and mastered it. I saw him a short time ago. He is a middle-aged man now. When I reminded him of the story, he laughed loud and long, like the big, burly, good-tempered Briton he is, and said, 'Yes; and if he should get into a passion now, Frank should have a ducking, as sure as he 's born.'

The children were much amused with Uncle Charlie's story.

'I haven't much pity for people with bad tempers,' said Uncle Charlie. 'A bad temper may be cured quite as easily as a bad cold. The best way is to starve it out. A hot temper soon hatches mischief, and is stung by its own brood. A bad temper makes every trouble double; a good temper soon makes it none at all. Remember what the good Book says, my bairns,—

'*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.*'

Once again the evening hymn was sung, and the young folks retired to rest.

THE THIRTEENTH HOUR.

SANDY M'ALLAN.

'WELL, good night, my boys. You've just done your work like Britons. Every lesson's done ye credit; an' yer auld tutor's as proud o' ye as a pullet o' her first chicken.'

Such was the hearty speech of Mr. Alexander M'Allan, who occupied the position of tutor to the masculine half of the six happy youngsters who dwelt under the roof of Middlethorpe Manor. He was a capital specimen of a clever, long-headed, and keen-witted Scotchman; a middle-aged man, with iron-grey hair and a grizzled beard, deep-set, piercing grey eyes, which twinkled far away under long, bushy lashes, like lights in a tunnel; a tall, gaunt Celt in form and feature, clad always in a suit of tweed chequered with the true plaid of the clan M'Allan; and when seen in full trim, his plentiful locks were capped with the 'bonnet of bonny Dundee,' and his shoulders were draped in a well-worn tartan scarf, which made him look like a Highland chief.

Uncle Charlie had met with him in a foreign port, where the good man had suffered by misfortune and fever, and like many another had been befriended by the warm-hearted skipper. Ever since he had cherished for his excellent benefactor an esteem which had become mutual; for the more Captain Marshall came to know of the honest Scotchman, the more he saw in him all the qualities of truth, manliness, fidelity, and honour in which his own soul delighted.

Seeing in Alexander M'Allan a scholar and a gentleman, he had lent him a helping hand, and now to everybody's satisfaction, the boys included, he was installed at Middlethorpe Manor as tutor to Masters Harry, Frank, and Tom Egerton, and had won the full affection and confidence of his youthful charge.

It would have done you good to hear him chant the praises of Uncle Charlie. 'He 's a gran' mon, yon,' he would say; 'a' soul frae his foot to his forelock; the varra cream o' human natur', an' sud hae been a Scotchman born and bred.' This last was Sandy M'Allan's highest compliment; the force of descriptive eloquence could no further go.

Such was the 'braw Scot' whom we heard just now talking to his pupils, whose hours of study were over for the day. I may say here, that he could vary his manner of speech from broad Scotch to the purest English possible to a north-countryman, whose power in this respect has its limits, as everybody knows. When he was highly delighted or deeply stirred, his tones were redolent of 'the land o' cakes;' when he was at the opposite extreme, his language might have passed even the criticism of Lord Chesterfield or Lindley Murray.

'Aff ye go for a run; a' work an' no play makes Jack a dull boy, though I haena muckle fear that onything wad mak' dull boys o' ye.'

'Hold hard, M'Allan! Hold hard! as the fisherman said to the lobster when he gripped the bait. Don't heave out too much ballast, or the saucy craft 'll capsize. I 'll warrant they can be as dull as a razor after cutting a hedgestake, and make as big blunders as Jack Bunker did when he dipped his head in the tar bucket to cure the toothache.'

So said Uncle Charlie, who had just put his head within the doorway in time to hear the tutor's unmeasured praises.

'No, that was Jack *Tar*, uncle,' said that young rogue Tom; and with a crack of laughter the boys bounded off to enjoy a game of leap-frog. Uncle Charlie and the 'dominie' followed by-and-by, to see the sport, and found the youngsters 'making backs' and clearing them in capital style. Tom was lithe, light, and supple, and bounded over the others as though he were gutta-percha and they were india-rubber.

'Hallo!' said he to the elders. 'Come and see the Bounding Brothers in their new and startling entertainment. These celebrated acrobatic champions, having performed their gymnastic

prodigies before the crowned heads of Europe, have added to their world-renowned troupe that dexterous artist Capitano Marshallini and that hitherto unheard-of marvel, Senor Alexandro

M'Allanovitch, and will now exhibit their extraordinary saltatory wonder, the Clan Celtish leap. Senor, make us a back!'

Instantly the tall, gaunt Scotchman took his station and bent his shoulders. Taking a running leap, Master Tom was likely to clear him in fine style, but the wary Scotchman seized him by the legs, lifted his head in time to catch the performer on his shoulders, and then, with his plaid flying behind him, he bore the hoisted champion at a sharp run around the paddock. The Shetland ponies and a couple of startled cows erected their tails to the perpendicular, and capered round in a mixture of fear and wonder. Uncle Charlie and the boys watched the process with unrestrained merriment, in which they were joined by the girls, who were just in time to see the fun. When the tutor saw the female observers, he made a profound bow, causing Master Tom to grip for dear life in his downward motion. He then danced a Highland fling without seeming aware of his burden, singing,—

'Ho, ho, Master Tommy! What would you be at?
You are a wonderful acrobat!
Who lifted you to this wonderful pitch?
Alexandro M'Allanovitch!'

'Uncle,' said Queen Mab, 'may we ask Mr. M'Allan to come into Capstan Cabin to-night? He has such a many nice stories, and he says he should like to come if he may.'

'All right, your majesty. You can tell him the skipper's willing, and he can come on board; but if he does, he'll have to obey orders and take his turn with the crew.'

Once again the old wainscot gleamed and flickered as the ruddy blaze threw out its cheerful glow; once again our youthful favourites and the genial captain formed the familiar circle round the hearth, and Mr. M'Allan, as the guest of the evening, occupied Harry's place in the chimney corner.

'Aye, but this is a canny corner! As I sit here, I am minded o' the wee bit ingle neuk ayont the Cheviots, when me dear auld mither o' blessed memory used to pit me by her knee an' tell o' the dear auld Scottish stories,' said the delighted guest.

'I should like to hear one,' said little Mabel. 'Please, [illegible] Mr M'Allan to tell us one.'

Uncle Charlie nodded. 'Aye, aye; he must spin us a yarn [illegible] and, and pay his footing. Folks aren't admitted into [illegible] Cabin for nothing.'

'Well, well,' said the tutor; 'what shall it be?' After considering a moment, he related the following beautiful and true story.

THE PIPING BULLFINCH.

'Whatever shall I do?' said old Andrew Austin, as he sat with his hands on his knees by his cottage hearth. Andrew was by trade a tailor, and though he was growing old, and his hair was getting thin and white, he had managed to earn his bread with his needle up to the very time when my story opens. He was exceedingly poor, and just now he was in sad trouble. He had for some time been busily engaged in making clothing for a family who were about to emigrate to Australia, and with the money he was to receive he hoped to pay his rent, which had fallen sadly behind through sickness and hard times.

When he took the work home the man promised to call and pay him in a few days; but instead of that, he and his family went away, and were soon out at sea, leaving poor Andrew without a farthing. The agent for the little cottage he lived in had called again and again for the rent, and at length he gave Andrew notice that if it was not paid within a week he should sell the old man's little stock of furniture by auction and pay himself. Poor Andrew had done his best to get work, but all in vain, and being honest as the day, he would not borrow, because he did not see how he was to pay it back again.

The last day of the week of grace had dawned, and Andrew, after a sleepless night, was seated by the fire with part of a loaf of bread upon the table at his side; but he could not eat, and sat crumbling a piece of bread, saying, 'Whatever shall I do?' Perhaps that very day his roof would no longer shelter him, and he should be cast out into the cold, unpitying street, without a

friend and without a home! The old man rose from his seat, took down a well-worn family Bible from the shelf, opened its sacred pages, then knelt upon the floor, and leaning his white head on it, began to pray.

Andrew knew how to pray. For many long years he had trusted in his Saviour, and had cast all his cares upon the poor man's God. He poured all his griefs into the ear of his heavenly Friend, and asked Him for His divine help and pity. Rising from his knees, he sat down to find comfort from the Word of God, and finding that he had been laying his white head on the seventy-second psalm, he read,—

For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

A bright smile lit up the old man's face as he said, 'Yea, Lord; for thy mercy endureth for ever.'

'He resolved to seek the agent and ask for a little more time, fully assured that God would make a way for his escape. No sooner had he opened the door, than a little bird flew past him and perched upon the mantelshelf, on which it hopped to and fro, chirping all the while as if delighted with its new quarters. Closing the door again, the old man watched the movements of the bird with childish interest. By-and-by his feathered visitor perched upon the table and began to help himself to the crumbs which the old man had made of his rejected breakfast. Then he perched on the little mug, and helped himself to a drink or two of water.

Old Andrew saw that the bird was a beautiful piping bullfinch, and as he was wondering how it had managed to come there, Bully perched upon the open Bible, and straightway began to pipe in clear, exulting notes the Old Hundredth. Right through the tune went he, whistling the mellow melody, until the little room was filled with music, and old Andrew smiled through his tears with wonder and delight.

By-and-by Bully started again, and piped a bar or two of the same tune, stopped, then repeated them, until the godly tailor seemed to think the bird wanted an accompaniment! And so the next time the bullfinch made a beginning, Andrew struck up too.

'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,'

sang the tailor; the bullfinch whistled ditto until the verse was finished. The old man felt at that moment utterly independent of money, agents, rent, or anything else, and conscious of nothing but a sweet sense of assurance that might be best expressed in the words of David, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'

The bullfinch, satisfied with this performance, now perched upon a shelf by the wall, and began preening his feathers as one quite at home. Unwilling to lose so sweet a guest, Andrew opened the door quickly, and, passing out, closed it again as quickly, leaving the little songster to complete his toilet in private. Away went the old tailor, with a heart as light as his pocket, but a good deal richer, and sought the house of the agent, to ask for a little longer space in which to raise his rent. That officer, either being in an unusually good temper, or gathering hope of ultimate payment from Andrew's happy countenance and hopeful tones, gave him another week; and then the old man turned homeward, humming to himself:—

'The birds without barn or storehouse are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread;
His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
So long as it 's written, "The Lord will provide!"'

As he was trudging along, Andrew was addressed by a servant in livery, whom he recognised at once as the footman of Lady Armistead, a wealthy and godly old lady, who lived at Basford Hall, about a mile and a half away from the village in which the tailor resided.

'Good morning, Andrew,' said the servant, who seemed to be an old acquaintance; 'you seem to be in good spirits to-day. One would think you 'd swallowed Lady Armistead's bullfinch, you sing so well.'

'Lady Armistead's bullfinch!' said Andrew, in surprise.

'Yes; it 's been missing these two days. I think I shall go home now, for it 's no use seeking it any more. Her ladyship 's in a fine way, for the bird was a great favourite, and a regular topper at whistling.'

'Well, well,' said Andrew, 'I have not swallowed the bullfinch; but, upon my word, I think I have swallowed its spirit, for I 've been as happy and lightsome as a bird ever since I heard it sing.'

'Heard it sing?' said footman John. 'Why, where could you have heard it sing? For until it flew away while its cage was being cleaned, it was not out of her ladyship's *boudoir;* and I reckon you don't often go there.'

'No, no, John; the bird came to my *boodwah,* as you call it; and for the matter of that, it 's there now, as you shall see for yourself, if you 'll come with me.'

'Aye, man,' said the footman, 'but that 's good news. The sight of her pet bird again will make her ladyship jump for joy.'

As the two continued their walk to the cottage, Andrew told his companion the whole story of his troubles, and how he prayed, and what God said to him out of His Book, and how the bullfinch came and cheered his heart; and how he had just been to the agent's, and had got another week to 'turn round in.' 'And look you here, John Morris, my rent 'll be ready when it 's wanted, as sure as my name 's Andrew; for that bird was sent by my heavenly Father, and it brought me His message on its beautiful wing, 'for His mercy endureth for ever.'

John listened with glistening eyes and a heart that sent a choking to the throat in sympathy, and by this time they had arrived at the cottage door. While Andrew was extracting the key from his pocket, 'Hark!' said the footman; 'listen to that!' And sure enough Bully was having a good time of it all to himself, trilling out from his throbbing breast the glorious old praiseful tune of—

'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'

Neither of the listeners stirred a step. Old Andrew stood with his key presented at the keyhole like a pistol, but did not insert it, lest he should break the spell, until the dying cadence told him that the song was finished. The precious prize was speedily captured and borne off, followed by the tailor's blessing, to its luxurious home in Lady Armistead's *boudoir.* Her ladyship's joy was unbounded; and when the eager footman told the story

of its brief residence under the tailor's roof, her ladyship laughed and cried in turns, and bade him hasten and fetch old Andrew to her presence. The godly peeress and the pious peasant were soon standing upon equal ground, while they interchanged experiences of their heavenly Father's love. The bullfinch, meanwhile, was hopping to and fro in its gilded cage, as though he had a personal interest in all that was going on. The money for the rent was soon forthcoming from her ladyship's bountiful purse, and more too. Andrew was told that money and work and food enough and to spare were his for the future at Basford Hall.

'God bless your ladyship,' said Andrew, with a grateful heart. Stirred by his earnest tones, Bully struck up his favourite tune; Andrew joined in the song,—

'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'

Her ladyship smiled in sympathy.

'Yes, yes,' said Andrew; 'for His mercy endureth for ever. Praise the Lord, His mercy endureth for ever!'

'Aye, aye!' said Uncle Charlie; 'ravens to Elijah, a dove to Noah, a bullfinch to Andrew, and two sparrows to anybody, can bring a message from a loving and gracious God. It only wants an expecting soul, an open ear, and a trustful heart to hear God's sweet whispers of help and comfort, however hard the storm blows, and however dark the weather. Thank you, Mr. M'Allan.'

'It's aye true,' said the tutor, 'it's aye true, dear bairns, that a leal heart shall have a leal God, and any pinion, from an archangel's to a bird's, shall cleave the darkest skies to bring "healing on its wings," to the sore, sad heart of God's trustful child. He is aye safe who has God for his friend.'

'Now, bairns, let us sing the evening hymn.'

And so, finishing with the grand old doxology, they once more dispersed, and Capstan Cabin was left to the silence of the night.

THE FOURTEENTH HOUR.

NUTS TO CRACK.

WHEN Uncle Charlie and his nephews and nieces—the captain and crew of Capstan Cabin—again met for their evening amusement, the genial Scotch tutor was again permitted to take his corner by the fireside. The fact is, that the genial Highlander's story of 'The Piping Bullfinch' was as good as an annual ticket; and doubtless hoping for more favours of the same kind, the young folks did not forget to ask permission again and again that he might join their ranks.

Uncle Charlie opened business at once by calling out, 'Overhaul the log!' And as Uncle Charlie himself had to take the dip, he pulled out the following poem, which he had evidently seen before:—

MABEL AND THE LINNET.

WHILE sitting at my breakfast
This very morn, I heard
A little conversation
'Twixt Mabel and her bird.

'Good morning,' said Miss Mabel,
'Miss Linnet; how are you?
This is a lovely morning,
And you are lovely too.'

'Good morning,' said the Linnet,
And preened her pretty wing;

'You are lovelier, you know;
And then how sweet you sing!'

'Nay, nay, my little birdie,
'T is you that sing to me
Your song of joy and gladness,
So mirthfully and free.'

'I sing,' quoth lady Linnet,
'Know you the reason why?
I read the notes of music
All written in your eye.

'Your voice is always cheery,
Your bright eyes ever shine,
Your joyous, little spirit
Puts music into mine.'

'Nay, nay, you foolish Linnet;
'T is you,' fair Mabel said;
'Your ringing notes of gladness
Put songs into my head.

'I woke without the music,
Was feeling rather sad;
You trilled your morning matins,—
Your singing made me glad.'

'Ha, ha! I see,' said birdie;
And looking wondrous wise,
And bright as if two angels
Were dwelling in its eyes,—

'The God that made the linnet
Has made its music too,
And bids me sing my matins
To cheer and comfort you.

'And though I 'm but a linnet,
There 's service in my song;
And I can trill a blessing
To help a heart along.'

'Yes,' said little Mabel sweetly;
'And though I 'm little too,
I can do a little service,
As I have done to you.

'I'll sing and work for Jesus,
And, guided by His hand,
Some day I'll sing more sweetly
Up in the better land.'

Such was the conversation
'Twixt Mabel and her bird;
And what I tell with pleasure,
With pleasure I have heard.

To me this thought came stealing,
Or like an angel's touch:
None are too mean for service,
The least can render much.

'And a good lesson too,' said Uncle Charlie, folding up the paper; 'service doesn't go by size. I'll match a steel pen against an Armstrong gun any day. The gun can make a mighty din, and may help to win a battle; but a pen can send a thought right round the world and right down the ages, helping men and women to be beautiful and true. Little, indeed! Why, a little spider taught a lesson to the hero Robert Bruce, and so won the battle of Bannockburn.'

'Hech, sirs!' said the Scotchman; 'that was a gran' fact, hooever, and the leeberties o' bonny Scotland were fixit for ivver an' a day.'

'Aye, aye,' said Uncle Charlie, hastily reining up the eager Scot, who was dangerous when he got upon that hobby, and never knew when to pull up. 'Little! Why, a little boy's hand, stopping a hole in a dyke, kept half the country of Holland from being swallowed by the sea. I'll tell you the story some day. In the good Book we are told of a little maiden who saved the life of a great general.

'"God doth give to all
Talents few or many;
None so young and small
That they have not any."'

Here there was a pause, and Master Frank drew forth the following riddle

---

'WHY AND BECAUSE.'

As I walked along the street,
Though I didn't mind it,
Through my *last* I saw my *first*,
With a man behind it.

Then, when I had gone to bed,
You perhaps may wonder,
I saw my *whole*, and in a trice
I put my body under.

'A siller saxpence for the first body that gies an answer till it, an' pits it into rhyme,' said Mr. M'Allan.

For a long time heads and pencils were at work, but Miss Marion won the day, by presenting the following:—

Along the street as I did pass
I looked, and through a *pane* of glass
I saw a *counter* broad and high,
With the shopman standing by;
And when I went to bed 't is plain
I slept beneath a *counterpane.*

Three cheers greeted the young lady; then Master Tom interposed one of his impromptu conundrums.

'When is a blister like a bedcover?'

Prompted by the answer to the charade, Frank responded, 'When it's used as a "counter-pain."'

Harry, not to be outdone, racked his brain for another, and suddenly said: 'What's the difference between Count D'Orsay the artist and a bed-quilt?'

This was a poser for a while, but eventually Tom cracked

the nut. 'Why,' said he, 'the one is a counterpane and the other is a *painter* Count.'

'May I ask this honourable house to give its attention to a small production which may probably be acceptable to our distinguished guest?'

'Tom,' said Uncle Charlie, 'don't you get into the habit of using jaw-breakers. I'm sorry to say the plain old Saxon English of John Bunyan and William Shakspeare is being jostled out by a lot of new-fangled words from the Greek and Latin, and from the French, forsooth, into the bargain. That grand sentence of yours would have looked a deal better in plain clothes. "May I ask the crew to hear a trifle that will please our guest?" There, that 's all plain sailing; as for the other lingo, it 's neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. Now then, launch your craft.'

Hereupon the laureate of Capstan Cabin produced the following charade, which was readily guessed by the delighted tutor, in whose honour it had been made:—

'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots whom Bruce has often led,'
Full oft before they go to bed
Have my *first* to supper.

Scots wha live where heather grows,
Where the bickering streamlet flows,
'Mid the hillocks and the knowes,
See full oft my *second.*

'Lay the proud usurpers low;
Tyrants fall in every foe,
Liberty 's in every blow,'—
My *whole* 's that field of battle.

'Varra gude, Maister Tom; varra gude,' said the tutor; 'but ye sud hardly ta'en sic a sacrileegious leeberty wi' that grand sang o' Robbie Burns. Ony Scotchman wad hae guessed it in a twinkling; it is——'

'Nay, nay,' quoth Uncle Charlie; 'all answers are given in poetry here. When you are ready, Mr. M'Allan, we shall be glad to have it in writing. Go on, Tom.'

'My next trifle,' said that young gentleman, 'has still a little to do with the land o' cakes:—

'HONEST JACK is my *first*, with my *first* on his hand;
And his face shows my *next* on sea and on land.
My *first* well laid on will keep out the weather,
My *second*'s connected with making of leather;
My *whole* is a garment with many a fold,
And is worn in the north by the Highlanders bold.
Now take me and break me and split me in three,
Two-thirds of the fragments tastes sweetly to me.
The rest forms an article often in use,
The object of much ungrammatic abuse.
Cut the tail from my whole, then alter the rest,
Of perfumes full surely I then am the best.
My head and my neck pray you sever again,
Reverse the remainder, and then it is plain
I 'm a nimble, marauding, invisible thief,
From which, if you wish to obtain a relief,
Transpose me, then use to the best of your skill,
And then you may chance the marauder to kill.'

'I say, Mister Middy,' said Uncle Charlie, 'that 's an awkward fellow to tackle. You begin with "Honest Jack" and end with a "thief;" and from one to the other, it 's all in and out like a dog in a fair. However, I dare say some of the yachts will sail through your shoal-waters. As for me, I shall keep my lumbering keel out of such smart navigation, or I shall run aground.'

Here Miss Marion also ventured to present a puzzle, which she introduced by saying,—

'I don't see why, if we are to guess riddles now and then, we should not have one here and there on Scripture subjects.'

'Right you are, sweetheart,' said Uncle Charlie, with a

smile. 'Studies from the good Book are always good, and in Capstan Cabin at any rate they will be always welcome. The more we know of the Bible the better; that 's the chart to steer by. Mind *it*, and you 'll run aground on no sand-banks, be sucked into no whirlpools, break on no rocks, sink in no storms, drive on no lee-shores. Mind *it*, and as sure as you sail over the sea of life, so sure will you be of making straight for port, of getting right into harbour, and of taking on board a cargo of joy that 'll last for ever. Dear bairns, one and all, *mind the good Book*, and read it every day. Now, Marion, time 's short, but your subject 's good; pay it out.'

FIVE TO ONE.

If you take a prophet who would not cease to pray,
In spite of many enemies, even for a day;
And a foolish prince beside, both beautiful and fair,
Who filled his father's heart with sorrow and with care;
And a queen who would not obey her lord's desire,
Nor appear in public unveiled, in rich attire;
A boy who with his mother was sent to wander wide,
And who but for her prayers full surely would have died;
And a charitable lady, who was full of kindly deeds,
And found her greatest pleasure in serving other's needs:
Then take the prophet, prince, and queen, the boy and lady too,—
Take from each the foremost letter, and they will show to you
One who, when evil spirits disturbed a certain chief,
Scattered all his troubles and by music brought relief.

'I am afraid it is too easy,' said Marion simply; 'but somebody else may make a harder one; only I hope they won't make it too hard, because I can't bear to "give it up."'

'Aye, lassie; but it is not the finding it out that 's all the trouble. We must have the answer in poetry, and that will make the thing worth the trouble, even if it is easy to guess.

'Now, boys and girls, you must all try to bring an answer; and it will surprise you to see how differently different people will describe the same thing.'

Once more good-nights were interchanged, and both captain, crew, and visitor retired to rest.

THE FIFTEENTH HOUR.

A JUMPING MATCH.

THE boys of Middlethorpe Manor were busily engaged in a jumping tournament, in which, though Harry's greater length of leg gave him an advantage, Tom, by reason of his light, elastic limbs and a wonderful Jack-in-the-box springiness, as if he lived on jumping powder—was a very close rival; and Frank, too, displayed an agility not to be despised. Each in turn 'toed the mark,' and each in turn alighted at a distance of some two yards 'more or less,' as the lawyers say, their heels digging into the turf as they dropped. Every now and then the leaper fell with equal weight upon another part of his body, unprotected by leather and heel-plates, and then a shout of laughter greeted the prostrate jumper as he lay.

Tom had just fairly cleared the mark which had been drawn, showing the result of previous leaps, when he shouted,—

'Riddle-ma-ree, boys! Why am I like a ship which has just crossed the equator?'

'Why, because you have just "crossed the line,"' said Harry as he took a leap, coming short, however, of the mark in question. 'Hallo!' said he; 'why should I go and see a doctor?'

'Because you're not up to the mark,' said Tom laughing. 'Now, Frank, go in and win.'

Frank pulled himself together for a mighty effort, took a flying leap, and lay prostrate upon mother earth.

'The turf shall be my fragrant shrine,' said he, quoting Tom Moore.

'He that 's down need fear no fall,' said Tom, quoting John Bunyan.

'Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on t' other side,' said Harry, quoting Shakspeare.

How long they would have continued their game can't be said, for they were arrested by a well known voice, singing,—

HEAVE AHOY!

Now then, lift up the anchor, boys! Hoist up the sail!
Quickly spread out the canvas, boys! Welcome the gale!
For the *Kingfisher* clipper 's a tight little craft;
All a-taut and a-tanto and trim fore and aft.
Heave a-hoy! Heave a-hoy!

Like a swan on the waters the *Kingfisher* glides;
Fair and fresh blow the breezes and fair flow the tides.
Now, boys, now! Keep her steady; beware of the bar.
See! she rides o'er the surges like old Neptune's car.
Heave a-hoy! Heave a-hoy!

Now she 's out and away o'er the wide, rolling sea,
And the beautiful clipper is bounding in glee!
Ho, ho, ho, boys! she 's gallantly ploughing the main!
Now God speed her, both outward and homeward again!
Heave a-hoy! Heave a-hoy!

As the sprightly sea-song died away with a loud, fortissimo 'Heave a-hoy!' Sailor Jack rounded the corner, and, showing his honest face over the paddock gate, was greeted with a round of hearty cheers from the trio of listeners, whom Jack had been regaling with his music without knowing it.

'Well done! and thank you, Jack!' said Harry. 'That smacks of sea-water, and no mistake. You make us feel as though we were on the "blue and briny."'

'Onkore! onkore! O Jack, I implore, as you did it before, pray give us some more, for the sea I adore, like the *buoy* at the Nore, on the wave or ashore!' said the incorrigible Tom.

To which Frank fitly responded, 'Tom, give o'er, and don't be a bore with your troublesome roar! How 's the wind and weather with you, Sailor Jack? We haven't seen you for an age.'

'Why, d' ye see, Master Frank, I 've had a precious tussle wi' the rheumatiz, an' I've had to keep i' my hammock and stay below decks till the squall passed. The plaguy old thing gripped me so hard that I felt it to the point of my hook.' Here he looked at that much valued member with great tenderness. 'And, upon my honour, I think he 's gi'n it a hextra twist!'

The boys, in kindly tones, expressed their sincere sorrow for his sufferings.

'O, bless you!' said Jack; 'it 's all right. Them as sails on

the sea of life, like them as sails on salt water, must expect all sorts of weathers an' make the best on 't. A bit o' patience an' honest seamanship, an' confidence in the Captain, an' obedience to His orders, pulls ye through. My old craft 's gettin' a bit crazy, an' creaks a good deal i' foul weather; but she 's i' smooth water again, now. There 's a blue sky overhead an' a smooth sea below; an', best of all, I 've no doubt o' gettin' safe into harbour when it pleases God.'

By this time Sailor Jack had joined them, and had discovered the nature of their amusement. Measuring the distance with his eye, from standing point to landing point, he said, 'I 'll tell 'ee what: that 's not a bad jump! A good two yards I reckon, an' more than that. But it isn't as big a jump as I once saw a young middy take when I was an A.B. seaman on board the *Hector*. Anchors and handspikes! but that *was* a jump!'

The boys saw by the gleam of his eye and the tones of his voice that Sailor Jack had the beginning of a good yarn on the tip of his tongue, and so, all of them eager for the recital, said, 'Why, what was that, Sailor Jack?'

Hereupon Jack placed himself in position, got his hook ready for oratorical action, and told his willing listeners the following story.

A BIG JUMP.

IT 's twenty years and more, d' ye see? since my story happened, but the entire business is as clearly scored upon my memory as though it were yesterday. The good ship *Hector*, with Captain Anerley for skipper, was as fine a man o' war as could be found in the navy. She was a tremendous big vessel, an' carried sixty-four guns; but she was as easy to handle as a lady's fan, and when forging through the waters she made her ten knots an hour, and with so little heeling and yawing that you might have played a game of billiards on her upper deck. But that 's neither here nor there, as the boy said when the bubble burst.

Well, the *Hector* was stationed in the Mediterranean, and at the time I 'm telling of was anchored off the port of Algiers. Captain Anerley was a topping sailor, an' as good a commander

as ever wore epaulettes. But he was a cool sort of a chap; a bit haughty like, and he didn't seem as though anything could make him show a bit o' feeling. He mostly looked so high and mighty, and had such a stand-offish way with him, that we used to call him 'old Stiff-back.' But he was upright and downright, all courage, from the heel of his boot to the peak of his cap; and all the crew had a solid respect for him, and were proud of him into the bargain.

Well, d' ye see? the Captain had a son on board; a fine, sharp, bright-eyed little customer, about eight or nine years old. He wasn't old enough to be rated, but he was dressed like a little midshipman, an' used to mess with the middies an' share their cabin and drill. Captain Anerley didn't seem to take any more notice of Master Arthur than of anybody else; we used to think the skipper was too proud to care for him; any way, he never showed it. Master Arthur was as active as a squirrel and as mischievous as a monkey. He used to climb about the ship, and mount the ladders, an' swing from one rope to another, as if he was a Barbary monkey born and bred. One day, when the sea was as smooth as a mill-pond, and the sky was as blue as a sailor's jacket, and not a capful of wind was to be had for whistling, the men were sitting or lolling under any shelter they could find, for the sun was as hot as a bo's'un's temper. The middies were having a game of 'setting suppers' as they called it, daring each other to do all sorts of tricks and climb to all sorts of places; now swinging in the mizen chains, now swarming along the bowsprit, now mounting to the cross-trees; an' that young pickle Master Arthur, small as he was, was more daring than the rest.

At first the men watched their antics and laughed at their jokes, and then most of them left the lads to themselves. By-and-by, however, one of the youngsters sang out, 'O, look at Master Arthur!' There was terror in his tones, and in a second a hundred eyes were fixed on the little fellow as he mounted the last splice of the mainmast, right away up in the sky, where it wasn't much thicker than a mop handle and not so stout as a handspike! It made me dizzy to look at him; not one of us dare utter a word, for fear of startling him, an' we expected to

see him fall any moment, a dead and mangled mummy on the deck!

The lad still mounted higher, until at last he stood bolt upright on the little block, which was just big enough for his feet, and looked for all the world like a tailor's button with the needle sticking through, while Master Arthur himself looked as small as a little wooden soldier atop of a weathercock! The first lieutenant had a face as white as a sheet, and going on the tip of his toes, as if he was afraid to shake the mast with his steps, he made his way to the captain's cabin, and told him the dreadful news. The captain said never a word; but when he came out his face was stern and his mouth set, his cheeks were deadly white, and his lips as bloodless as a stone. Standing where he could get a good view of the lad, who was still on the narrow ledge, with his hands on the point of the mast, the captain called out,—

'Arthur!'

'Yes, papa!' said the lad, who was now aware of his danger.

'Do you see this pistol?' said he, pointing it directly at him.

'Yes, papa.'

'Well, as sure as I live, I'll shoot you, if you do not jump overboard! One. *Two.* THREE!'

In an instant the boy sprang from the bending mast and dropped like a shot into the sea. Half a dozen blue jackets were stripped off in a twinkling, and the plucky fellows swam to the spot where he went down. Down deep enough he had gone, and some seconds passed before he appeared on the surface. He was then seized, and borne in triumph to the ship. When he reached the deck, and stood dripping before his father's stern, white face, the crew stood breathless, wondering what would come next. The captain stooped and kissed him, and the men set up a ringing cheer until he disappeared down the gangway. The boy was none the worse for his big jump, but when the captain appeared on the deck next morning, we all saw that his dark hair was thickly streaked with white, and then we knew what the father had felt when he made his son take that desperate leap for life.

The three lads had listened with bated breath while Sailor Jack related his exciting story.

'I'll tell you what,' said Harry, 'that youngster was a plucky little Briton.'

'Aye,' said Frank; 'and his father was a plucky Briton too, and no mistake. I'll warrant, the hand that held the pistol was as steady as a statue, though his heart was thumping against his ribs with fear.

'What a jump!' said Tom. 'I wonder how he felt as he went flying through the air, and then dropped twenty fathoms deep beneath the sea.'

'Why,' quoth Sailor Jack, 'the youngster declared that he was afraid to venture; but he felt so certain that his father would shoot him, that he was bound to make the spring.'

'Many a time since then,' continued Jack, 'I've thought that when the great Captain sternly orders us into trouble and distress, He does it all i' tender pity, to make us jump into the sea of His wonderful love.

'I remember talking about it with a messmate o' mine on board the *Hector*, called Tom Simpson.

'"Jack," says he, "that pistol business looked confounded cruel; but it was a marciful dodge to save the young 'un, an' I've a notion that God sends many a gale o' wind to blow great guns an' drive us snugly into port."

'"Aye, aye," says I; "but what a pity it is that we are so fond of getting into mischief, an' climbing about into risky places without the Captain's orders!"

'"Right you are, messmate," said he, clapping me on the back; "an' you an' me 'll give 'em a wide berth, an' keep the solid plank o' truth and duty between us and all danger."

'Poor Tom Simpson!' quoth Jack; 'he was a brave fellow and a good Christian. He was wounded in a brush with some Malay pirates, an' now he 's gone aloft, where there is no danger, an' no need o' jumping down.'

Again the lads expressed their hearty thanks to the honest old tar for his capital story; he bade them good evening, and they thoughtfully bent their steps towards Capstan Cabin.

THE SIXTEENTH HOUR.

BEHIND TIME.

AFTER listening to Sailor Jack's stirring story of 'The Big Jump,' the three boys turned their steps to Capstan Cabin, and as they neared the door of the Manor House they saw the red firelight gleaming through the wide old window, and lighting up the features of cheery Uncle Charlie, the winsome curls of Queen Mab, the smiling faces of Marion and Ida, and the long, grey hair of Sandy M'Allan, who had doubtless come prepared to answer Tom's riddle.

No sooner did the young laggards show themselves within the cabin door, than Uncle Charlie opened fire.

'What do you mean, you young slow coaches? You sail into harbour as fast as a coal barge going stern foremost in an ebb tide. I'll *stir your stumps*, as the cricket ball said to the batsman.'

'Nay,' Uncle Charlie,' said Harry; 'don't *bowl us out* when we've only just come in.'

'If you'll only excuse us,' said Frank, with a laugh, 'we'll make it up by a *long stop*.'

'Yes, please, Uncle Charlie,' quoth Harry. 'It was only a *short slip* after all. While you were having your *innings* we were *out*, and but for Sailor Jack's *blocking* we should have been here before.'

'So you see, you must not *pitch* into us, for we didn't do it *wicket*ly,' said that awful punster Tom, amid the 'Oh, oh's!' of the company.

'Aye, aye,' said Uncle Charlie; 'but if you had *made a score of runs*, I 'll go *bail* you might have been up to time.'

'*Well caught!*' said Sandy M'Allan; and so, amid laughter and glee, the little party sat down for a pleasant evening.

'Bairns,' said Uncle Charlie, 'it's good to be merry *and wise;* and though we have let these young laggards off with a laugh, depend on't, the habit of being late is a very bad 'un. A little leak will sink a ship, and a few minutes dropped here and there will spoil a day, and if it comes every day will eat like dry rot into your life. Hoist your sails when time 's up, or ebb tide will leave your bark on a sandbar. Take care of your reckoning, or you'll lose your latitude. Steer your life by the needle and the sun, the compass and the clock; and though you may have the wind in your teeth, you will come riding into port. Take time by the forelock, for the old fellow's as bald as a billiard ball behind. Folks talk about making up for lost time, but it is easier said than done. You can only sail so many knots an hour, and if you carry too much canvas, you may go down on your broadside or your sails may be torn to shivers. Sure and steady wins the day.'

'Hech, sirs,' said Sandy M'Allan, 'I weel remember the story of a wee Glasgow laddie, who proved the wisdom of being true to the clock.'

All the 'bairns' were delighted at the prospect of another story from the clever old Scotchman, who at once gave them the true history of Peter M'Owan.

PUNCTUAL PETER.

THAT was a dark day in the cottage of Widow M'Owan when her good man was carried to the grave, and she and her orphan bairn were left to fight the battle of life as best they could. The good woman sat in her lonely house, with her little son, a fine, braw fellow of nine summers, standing by her knee, and wept bitterly.

'Dinna greet, mither,' said the lad, 'dinna greet sae; faythers gone to live wi' Jesus, and he telled us we wasna to fret aboot

him, for he was gaun to be happy wi' angels in heaven. He put his hand o' my head an' said, "Dinna greet, bonny bairn; but be a good lad to yer mither, for she 'll hae naebody else but thee the noo." Kiss me, mither, an' I 'll be your ain wee Peter, an' I 'll be a good lad, as faythe r said.'

The widow listened, and was comforted; and hugging the bright boy to her heart, said,—

'God bless my bairn! We haena muckle frens, but we hae ane anither; an' noo that the dear faythe r's gone,'—here a fresh burst of sobs checked her voice,—'God 'll help us baith.'

'Aye, an' I 'll help you, mither,' said Peter stoutly, and every tone of his voice had the ring of a big, strong heart in it. Peter was a tall, fine lad, and might well have been taken for two or three years older than he really was.

Nothing would serve him but he must go to work; and as Widow M'Owan had to earn her bread, it was needful that the lad should begin betimes and pick up a little, at any rate, towards his own subsistence.

One day Peter came running home, and tossing up his cap for joy, he said,—

'Mither, Mr. Dalkeith says he 'll tak me for his errand lad, an' he 'll gie me saxpence a day, an' my dinner, and anither saxpence o' Saturday nicht if I be a gude lad. An' *I will*, mither!' shouted Peter, as he flung up his cap to the roof-tree and threw himself into his mother's arms, and laughed and cried, like the big-hearted boy that he was.

So to Mr. Dalkeith the druggist went Peter on the following Monday morning, at seven o'clock, according to orders. On his way he noticed an elderly man taking down the shutters of his shop, who bade the bright-looking lad a cheery 'good morning,' which Peter as cheerily returned. His foot was on the step of Mr. Dalkeith's shop just as the big clock of St. Dunstan's Church began to boom out the hour of seven; and Mr. Dalkeith, who was standing in the doorway, said with a smile,—

'Good morning, Peter; I 'm glad that you and the old church clock agree so well together.' Then laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, he said, 'Mark me, my boy; keep friends with the church clock. That steeple 's haunted. There 's a spirit which

lives in that old clock chamber. I know the queer old genî well. I looked up in his face a few minutes since and asked old *Tempus Fugit* to look after my new errand boy, and help me to make a man of him. Peter, my boy, *keep friends with the clock.*'

Peter could hardly understand all the good druggist's meaning; still, he had an inkling of it, and went about the duties of the day resolved to bear it in mind. On his return home in the evening, he told his mother what Mr. Dalkeith had said. His mother listened with a smile, and said,—

'Varra gude, my bairn, varra gude. He just means that you should aye keep the time. Many folks are aye in a hurry and aye behint; an' the puir, feckless chiels are allus ower late, an' go blundering through the world with nae siller i' the purse an' nae wit i' the pow.'

The good woman taught her boy in the evenings, so far as her own scanty education would permit, and Peter went every day to the shop just in time to hear the chimes and the loud boom of the old church clock. Mr. Dalkeith would often say, 'Well, Peter, what does the clock say this morning?' And Peter would answer with a smile, 'It says, "Dalkeith's boy 's in time again!"'

'Right, Peter,' the master would respond, 'that's right. Always keep friends with the clock.'

So the days and months rolled on until Peter was taken as an apprentice by his kindly master, who greatly approved of the boy's punctuality and diligence. Now, the old gentleman whom Peter saw on his first morning's walk to the shop was as regular as clock-work, and every morning, as Peter passed, he saw him pulling down his shutters, so as to have his place opened by seven o'clock. Kindly 'good mornings' were interchanged every day, until at last Mr. Campbell, as the gentleman was called, took quite a liking to the tall, promising lad who came and went so constantly and so exactly up to time.

'I wonder who he is?' said he, as he sat rubbing some jewellery, for he was a watchmaker and jeweller, in his shop one day. 'Whoever he is, there is the makings of a man in him. He goes tick, tick, like a chronometer. I pull down my shutters and say good morning, he puts up his pleasant face, and says,

"Good morning, Sir," and as soon as the blue shine of the bottles in the druggist's window falls upon his cap, boom goes St. Dunstan's clock, One, two, three, four, five, six, seven! That lad 's a brick, and I must have a little talk with him.'

One day, as Peter was passing Mr. Campbell's shop door, one of his master's shopmen met him, and said, with a sneer, 'Well, Mr. Punky, you 're a sneaking little monkey;' for he and the other fellows in Mr. Dalkeith's employ were jealous of the lad who had won their master's favour, and who was praised and rewarded while they were scolded and condemned; then with a loud laugh at his own wit, the shopman passed on.

Mr. Campbell, who had heard the remark, was out of the shop in a moment, and beckoning Peter, said,—

'Excuse me, Master Punky, you pass my shop so regularly, that I feel I should like to make your acquaintance.'

'My name is not Punky,' said Peter, blushing; 'it 's Peter M'Owan, Sir, and I 'm an apprentice with Mr. Dalkeith the druggist.'

'Not Punky? Then I beg your pardon, but I thought I heard the young man who has just passed call you by that name.'

'O,' said Peter, with a deeper blush, 'that 's a nickname the fellows in our shop give me; but,' said he with a laugh, 'I dinna mind it.'

'Punky, Punky! Why, whatever does it mean?' said the jeweller.

'Why,' quoth Peter, looking into Mr. Campbell's face with an open and ingenuous smile, 'I always try to be in the shop exactly at the time, an' so they began by calling me Punctual Peter; but I suppose they thought it was ower long, an' so they 've cut it short to "Punky."' And neither Peter nor his hearer could help laughing as he said it.

In the course of conversation the kindly old man extracted from the youth all the history of his father's death, his mother's hard struggle for home and bread, and how he was trying to earn a livelihood, and hoped by-and-by to keep his mother, so that she should not have to work any more. Mr. Campbell then

shook him warmly by the hand, and making him promise to give him a call now and then, bade him 'good evening.'

'Punky,' said Mr. Campbell to himself, as he sat in his snug little sitting-room, all alone, except for a favourite cat, which was perched upon his knee, for he was an old bachelor; 'yes, Punky's the boy for *my* money!' The old man rubbed his hands and stroked his cat, and smiled as though he had got hold of a bright idea.

On the following Sunday evening, just as the little clock in the widow's kitchen was striking *seven*, while Peter and his mother were reading a Bible lesson, there was a knock at the door. When Peter went to open it, a man put a small package into his hand, and saying, '*Tempus Fugit* has sent this,' away he went without another word. The packet was instantly opened, and two small parcels appeared; on the one was written, 'For Punky,' and the other, 'For Punky's mother.' When her paper was unwrapped, lo! ten golden sovereigns gleamed and smiled at them, as if they knew how welcome they were to the poor toiling widow. Punky's parcel contained a beautiful little silver watch, the hands of which were at *seven* o'clock or near it, and the little thing went tick, tick, ticking away as who should say, 'Punctual Peter's the boy for me!' Peter and his mother exchanged glances of speechless surprise.

'Well, this *is* a go!' said Peter at length. Who *can* have sent them. *Tempus Fugit* makes it look like Mr. Dalkeith's, and Punky makes it look like Mr. Campbell's doing, an' yet I can't understand why either of 'em should hae done it.'

The fact was, that Mr. Campbell had gone to Mr. Dalkeith to make inquiry as to the character of my punctual hero, and their conversation had resulted in a united resolve to send these presents to the widow and her son.

I must not make my story too long. Peter continued to retain and deepen the esteem in which he was held by his master; he rose from one grade to another, until he became the confidential manager of Mr. Dalkeith's establishment, and when he was able to take 'the dear mither' away from her poor cottage and hard toil, and place her in his own home, surrounded with every comfort, his satisfaction was complete. Old Mr. Campbell spent

much of his leisure time in Peter's house, and had no greater delight than to welcome the thrifty son and the happy widow into his back parlour.

At length the old man died, and left the whole of his savings and stock-in-trade, amounting to some thousands of pounds, to 'Peter M'Owan, my young friend "Punky."' At the foot of his will were these words,—'He who best knows the value of time will give the best account of it in eternity.' The only con-

dition attached to the bequest was that Peter should visit the old man's grave at *seven* o'clock in the morning on the anniversary of his death.

Twenty years afterwards Peter became the mayor of his native city, having also received the honour of knighthood for his services in the cause of philanthropy. He took for his crest a sun-dial, with the shadow at the figure *seven*, and the motto *Tempus Fugit*. On the Sunday after Sir Peter M'Owan was chosen mayor, he went to morning service at St. Dunstan's

Church, his 'dear auld mither' hanging on his arm. Just as they passed into the porch, the old clock chimed out its hourly burden.

'Mother,' said Peter, 'do you know what the chimes are saying? Hark!—"Punky! God is good to you."'

'Aye,' said the grey-haired matron, looking into his face with a proud and happy smile; 'hark, again! "Good to Punky's mither, too."'

'There,' quoth Sandy M'Allan, when his story was ended, 'You see, dear bairns, the wit and the wisdom of Mr. Dalkeith's advice to Peter M'Owan, "*Be sure to keep friends with the clock!*"'

The young folks expressed great delight with the tutor's story, and Uncle Charlie said,—

'Aye, aye, bairns; take good care of the minutes, and the years will take care of themselves. Time is the stuff that life is made of, and they who learn to use it well, will have all eternity to thank God for the good it brought them. The good Book itself has no wiser counsel for us all than to "redeem the time."'

THE SEVENTEENTH HOUR.

TRUE TO TIME.

WHEN the young people assembled again around the cheery fire in Capstan Cabin, the charming story of 'Punctual Peter' was again the topic of conversation, and drew from them all the warmest expressions of delight.

'The chimes of St. Dunstan's,' said Queen Mab, 'were as good as the bells of Bow, that Dick Whittington heard.' Which was very high praise indeed.

'Varra true, your majesty,' said the tutor. 'Depend on it, there's a great deal to be learned from "the bells in the old church tower" if we have got "ears to hear;" and the spirit of the steeple will make them chime just the song that will suit us best. I remember that the three bells in the kirk of my native village used to talk to me every time I went to service; sometimes they rang, *Just in time*, at others, *Don't be late*, or, *Worship God*, and then they sounded their simple *Ding-dong-bell;* and to this day I like to hear what the bells have got to say.'

'Aye, aye,' said Uncle Charlie; 'I remember when I was a boy getting off by heart some lines, and repeating them every time the church bells pealed out their music,—

"Ding-dong bell, Hear us tell,
What to do, To live well.
Up betimes, Kneel and pray,
Ask God's care, For the day.

Doing good, Hating sin,
Heaven's gate, Enter in!"

'Now I 'll tell you a little story, how I managed to cure one of my sailors of the bad habit of being always behind time.'

A FEW MINUTES LATE.

WHEN I was captain of the *Albatross*, I had a chief mate who had a sad habit of being always what he called 'a few minutes late.' George Harker was a clever sailor, and could handle a ship as well as any man in the navy, but he was always behindhand. On one occasion he ran the ship aground, because he neglected to take the tide at the flood; on another, he lost me a homeward cargo, because he failed to meet the shippers at the time appointed; on another, he failed to come on board at all, because he had 'missed the train.' He was late in turning out of his hammock, late in going on his watch, late even at mess, and all that I could say could not cure him of his unpunctuality. At last I determined to give him a sharper lesson than ever.

We were out on a long voyage to the Chinese seas, and fell short of water. I put into a little harbour on a small, uninhabited island, and sent him with the bo's'un and half-a-dozen sailors in a boat to get the barrels filled. 'Mr. Harker,' said I, 'you must not be away more than six hours, or we shan't be able to get the ship out.'

'Aye, aye, Sir,' said he, readily enough, and away they went. Meantime I had given strict orders to the bo's'un to bring the boat back at the time appointed, and if the chief mate wasn't there he was to push off without him. Sure enough, towards dusk the boat's crew were all on board, and Harker, who was a few minutes behind as usual, was left ashore.

I had the anchors lifted in a jiffey, sails out, and the *Albatross* was out of the bay and round the headland, before the loitering mate, who had gone inland with his gun, returned to the landing place. I brought the vessel round to a little sheltered creek, with which I was familiar, on the north of the island, and in which the ship could not easily be seen, and then, in the gather-

ing shades of night, half a dozen men rowed me silently ashore. By-and-by we heard Harker shouting at the top of his voice, 'Ship a-hoy, ship a-hoy!' We made no answer, but stole stealthily through the bush, until we heard a gun-shot, a second, and a third, and then another round of shouting from the forsaken mate, who was evidently getting thoroughly frightened. At a given signal, my half dozen men set up a terrible howl, and then growled in concert, like a cross-breed of tigers and hyænas. The horrid noise woke all the echoes of hill and wood, and in the lonely solitude of night it certainly was enough to make a stout heart quail, and poor Harker was a *harker* then and no mistake. In another moment we heard the crackling of the brushwood; and, by the light of the moon, we saw the scared officer at the foot of a giant cotton tree, which he scaled like a monkey; mounting from branch to branch like a squirrel, until he had gained a safe seat high up and out of the reach of the savage *wild beasts*, who were still snarling down below.

We silently retreated a little way, and then I ordered a parting salute, in which the sailors mixed up the growls of a whole menagerie and let them loose on the night. Leaving the trembling mate to cogitate and mourn over his lonely lot, we rapidly made our way to the boat, making, every now and then, the night hideous by our screams and growls; thence to the ship, which in a little while was again anchored in its former resting place.

Just before daylight, for I rightly guessed that the late Mr. Harker would not dare to leave his perch at an earlier hour, I sent the bo's'un and the same crew with the water barrels just as they had filled them, to the spot where they had first landed, to wait for the officer to turn up. 'Ship a-hoy! ship a-hoy!' once more broke the silence. 'A-hoy! a-hoy!' shouted the boat's crew, and in a few minutes my gentleman was in the boat, looking all the worse for his night's scare and his uncomfortable lodgings in the tree.

'Why, bo's'un,' said Harker, 'wherever have you been?'

'Why, up and about all the blessed night, Sir, looking for you,' said the bo's'un, stretching the truth a little. 'You did not come at the time, and the captain's orders was "four o'clock or the cat." So we went back, but the skipper wouldn't even let

us take out the barrels, and ordered us at once to follow you. So we went north and we came south, and we made *row enough* to waken the dead, but you never answered, so there was nothing for it but to wait till you turned up.'

By this time they were aboard ship, and Mr. Harker came aft to me. With a sheepish look on his face, he touched his hat.

'Hallo, Mr. Harker!' said I; 'I thought you must have decided to do a little Robinson Crusoe business on your own account. What on earth has detained you? We ought to have been well on our way to Hong Kong by this time. Where *have* you been?'

Poor Harker stammered out his apologies. 'Well, Sir,' said he, and his face was as red as the sun in a fog, 'I happened to be a "few minutes late," and the boat put off without me.' Then, seeing the cloud of frowns which was gathering on my face, he hastily said, 'I hope you will excuse me, Sir, for I have paid penalty enough. The island is infested with lions and tigers and wolves and bears. They gathered round me by hundreds, and chased me until I had to climb a tree for safety, and I spent the night there without getting a wink of sleep. If you will kindly overlook it, Sir, I 'll never be behind again.'

To do him justice, he never was. 'On that condition,' said I, 'I will say no more about it, Mr. Harker; and you may depend upon it, when you have cured yourself of a very bad habit, nobody will be better pleased than I shall myself.'

He set to work with a will, and mastered, as everybody may, his besetting sin, and is now Captain Harker of the *Memphis;* but to this day he believes the Karena Islands, where he passed his sleepless night, to be infested with as many wild beasts as an Indian jungle.

The youngsters were a good deal tickled at the picture of the dilatory sailor scuttling up the tree with Uncle Charlie's wild beasts behind him, and Sandy M'Allan said,—

'Hech, Sirs, but it did the loitering callant muckle good; an' it wadna be amiss if some other laggard chiels were growled into a wee bit hurry when they are maist wanted.'

Here the tutor fixed his grey eyes on Master Frank, who, it must be confessed, was often 'a few minutes late' at lesson time.

'WHY AND BECAUSE.'

'First mate,' said Uncle Charlie, causing a diversion, much to Frank's delight, 'it is high time we were taking our bearings and posting up the log. Who's got an answer to Marion's Scripture charade?'

'I have,' said Ida; and straightway read out,—

D-*aniel* was the prophet who would not cease to pray.
A-*bsalom* was the prince who went so far astray.
V-*ashti* was the queen who refused the king's behest.
I-*shmael* was the boy who was like to die of thirst.
D-*orcas* was the lady who made garments for the poor,
DAVID played and sung, King Saul's sad grief to cure.'

'Three cheers for Ida,' said Uncle Charlie; 'a good answer, well put. Now, Master Harry, what have you to say? Tom's nut had a hard shell. If you have cracked it, show us the kernel.'

Harry instantly responded,—

Jack was a *tar,* and had *tar* on his hand;
Sun, wind, and weather his features had *tan*ned.

In the highlands of Scotland the *tartans* are worn,
Which keeps out the cold, men's bodies adorn.
Two-thirds make a *tart*, which is seldom refused,
And *an* is an article often abused.
When tailless and altered the *tartan* becomes,
The *attar* of roses, the first of perfumes.
Take off head and shoulders, reverse what is left,
And the *rat* is made plain, often guilty of theft.
But transposed, you may *art*-fully set him a trap,
And the thief then will suffer a fatal mishap.

'Well, that 's a queer picture, and no mistake,' said Uncle Charlie. 'A man in a *tartan* with his hands all *tan*ned and *tarry*, after eating a *tart*, baits a trap with *attar* of roses and *art*fully catches a *rat!*'

The children were much amused with Uncle Charlie's odd way of putting it, and then the skipper said,—

'Now, Mr. M'Allan, we are ready for your answer to Tom's Scottish puzzle?'

Hereupon the willing tutor repeated the following lines:—

On the borders of the *Bannock*, a little rippling *burn*,
There was fought a mighty battle, to which with pride I turn.
The second English Edward, with a hundred thousand men,
Attacked the brave and gallant Bruce, who beat him back again.
He had but thirty thousand Scots who came to do or die;
He routed the invader, and made his hosts to fly.
Hurrah for Bruce and Scotland, its vassalage is o'er!
At *Bannockburn* its liberties were won for evermore.

The lines were recited with true patriotic fire by the fervid Scotchman, and three hearty cheers were given for Sandy M'Allan and bonny Scotland.

'Now, Master Frank,' said Uncle Charlie, 'I see you 've got something inside that piece of paper you are looking at so earnestly; if the crew will be any the better for it, pay it out.'

Frank's contribution was an amusing specimen of alliteration, and fitly fostered in fully facile fashion, by its fanciful and fantastic form, a famous fervency of fun.

FAIR FENELLA:

A FELICITOUS FLIGHT OF FANCY.

A FAMOUS fish-factor found himself father of five flirting females—Fanny, Florence, Femanda, Francesca, and Fenella. The first four were flat-featured, ill-favoured, forbidding-faced, freckled frumps, fretful, flippant, foolish, and flaunting. Fenella was a fine-featured, fresh, fleet-footed fairy, frank, free, and full of fun. The fisher failed, and was forced by fickle fortune to forego his footman, forfeit his father's fine fields, and find a forlorn farmhouse in a far-off and forsaken forest. The four fretful females, fond of figuring at feasts in feathers and other fashionable finery, fumed at their fugitive father. Forsaken by fulsome, flattering, fortune hunters, who followed them when first they flourished, Fenella fondled her father, flavoured their food, forgot her flattering followers, and frolicked in a frieze without flounces. The father, finding himself forced to forage in foreign parts for a fortune, found he could afford a fairing to his five fondlings. The first four were fain to foster their frivolity with fine frills and fans, fit to finish their father's finances. Fenella, fearful of flooring him, formed a fancy for a full, fresh flower.

Fate favoured the fish-factor for a few days, when he fell in with a fog, his faithful filly's footsteps faltered, and food failed. He found himself in front of a fortified fortress. Finding it forsaken, and feeling himself feeble and forlorn with fasting, he fed on the fish, flesh, and fowl he found, and when full, fell flat on the floor. Fresh in the forenoon, he forthwith flew to the fruitful fields, and not forgetting Fenella, he filched a fair flower; when a foul and frightful figure flashed forth. 'Felonious fellow, fingering my flowers, I 'll finish you! Fly, say farewell to your fine felicitous family of females, and face me in a fortnight!' The faint-hearted fisher fumed and faltered, and fast and far was his flight. His five daughters flew to fall at his feet and fervently felicitate him. Frantically and fluently he unfolded his fate. Fenella forthwith, fortified by filial fondness, followed her father's footsteps, and flung her faultless form at the feet of the frightful figure, who forgave the father, and fell

flat on his face, for he had fallen in a fiery fit of love for the fair Fenella. He feasted and fêted her, till, fascinated by his faithfulness, she forgot the ferocity of his face, form, and features, and frankly fixed Friday, fifth of February, for the affair to come off. There were festivities, fragrance, finery, fireworks, fruit, and fare fit for the most fastidious. Then the frightful form of the fortunate but frumpish figure fell from him, and he fell at Fenella's feet a fair-favoured, fine, frank freeman of the forest. Behold the fruits of filial affection!

'Frank! Frank!' said Uncle Charlie. 'Fie! fie! Forbear, for the future, to furnish flippant, fruitless, frivolous freaks of folly for friends. Fie, Frank, fie!'

Then the little party once more broke up, and left the failing embers of the beechwood faggots to flicker on the wainscot of Capstan Cabin until they died out into the dark.

THE EIGHTEENTH HOUR.

UNCLE CHARLIE'S PHILOSOPHY.

THE hearthstone of Capstan Cabin was glowing brightly with the cheery blaze of a rousing winter fire when Uncle Charlie and his 'gallant messmates,' the younkers of Middlethorpe Manor, once more took their accustomed places. The green baize bag by Harry's side was full almost to bursting. for during the last few weeks the entertainment had been supplied from other sources.

'Overhaul the log,' quoth Uncle Charlie; and so Master Harry produced the following lines.

THE WISE MAN AND THE WISEACRE.

GREAT Socrates the wise,
He had a pair of eyes
(Many people have them, but do not use them well)
To distinguish sense
From a mere pretence;
And hereon hangs the story which I have got to tell.

He met, upon a day,
A certain youth, they say,
A youth who, as to features, was wonderfully fair.

'Surely every grace
Is dwelling in that face;
Speak,' said he, 'that I may know if sense is dwelling there.

'To judge birds, hear them sing;
To judge coins, hear them ring;
Therefore, speak, my handsome fellow, and without a doubt
I shall know if you have sense,
Or if it's all pretence;—
Speak! to tell me if the inside is as handsome as the out.'

'Aye, aye,' interposed Uncle Charlie; 'beauty is but skin deep, after all. Many a leaky hull has a fine figure-head. A ship may sit like a swan on a sunny bay, and roll like a tub when the anchor's hove. That old Greek was up to a thing or two. He knew that curly locks and rosy cheeks could not make a good head-piece, any more than fresh paint and gilding can make a ship A 1 at Lloyd's. A chap may have a head like Apollo, and still be a ninny. Read on, Harry.'

So then the handsome youth,
To this worshipper of truth
Began to babble without ceasing—to Socrates the sage.
The words so quickly fell,
He had as much to tell,
As if *he*'d the wise man's learning and all the wise man's age.

'Your terms then to teach me,
Sir Socrates?' said he.
'My charge is twenty talents,' was the answer that he got.
Still talked the flippant youth
To this teacher of the truth,
Exactly like the hubble-bubble of a boiling pot.

The philosopher said, 'Come,
I must double now the sum.'
Then the self-assertive youth did beg to ask him, 'Why?'
'Why? 'T is plain as it can be:
Double trouble, don't you see?
For to empty your vain noddle I shall have to try.

'Your head is full, no doubt;
But what 's in should be out.
To rid you of your folly is a work of time and skill.
At talking you 're immense,
But it isn 't common-sense;
To get rid on 't will be harder than an empty head to fill

'Your vain and stupid talk
Would all the gods provoke;
And would give your patient teacher no end of time and trouble.
And so you see, young man,
This is the only plan;
And for unlading rubbish I am bound to charge you double.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Uncle Charlie; 'very good. That youngster was like a ship at sea with unpacked wool for a cargo and chaff for ballast. The bark heels and yaws like a duck in a thunderstorm; and if the wind blows fresh, she 's sure to capsize. His brain-pan was filled from a feather-bed; and of all fools, the talking fool is the greatest lubber. Bairns, you 've all got a decent stock of good looks, but you must try to carry a good cargo. It 's all very well to spread a show of bunting and to carry a big flag; but good steering, a truthful compass, a valuable cargo, and a clean bill of moral health is a good deal better. Don't fill your heads with nonsense, novel reading, and vanity. That 'll be of no more use to you than sending a ship to Australia with a cargo of thistle-down to bring back a lading of bush-grass, let alone the danger of toppling over in mid-ocean for want of ballast. With all your gettings, get understanding.'

The Budget was again appealed to, and this time Marion extracted the manuscript, and read the following little story.

BEN THE BOOTBLACK.

DR. PASCAL, the president of Clevedon College, was sitting one day in his study, when he heard a low, timid knock at the

door. 'Come in,' said he; and immediately there stood in the doorway a poor lad, about sixteen years of age. Very rough and uncouth in appearance was the boy; dressed in coarse home-spun, with thick, clumsy shoes on his feet, and an old battered hat on his head, surmounting a shock of dark, uncombed hair. His eyes were quick and sparkling, and his face wore a look of deep anxiety.

'If you please, Sir,' said the little rustic, 'I 'd like to pick up a bit o' larnin'.'

'Very good,' said the worthy doctor, with a smile; 'but what brings you here?'

'Why,' said the lad, 'I heerd you kep' a college here, an' I thought if I worked a spell for you, you would help me now and again to get a bit o' schooling.'

'Nay,' said Doctor Pascal, 'we have nothing for you to do. Where 's your father and mother?'

'I ain't ne'er a one,' said the boy, as a cloud lowered over his face; 'both are died, an' my mother wanted me to get a bit o' eddication.'

'Why, you see,' said the doctor, both amused and interested, 'we have nothing here for you to do. All the situations are filled up.'

'Aye,' said the lad; 'but I can do a mony things. I can cut wood an' carry it; I can bring water to the kitchen; I can black yer boots; I can sweep.' At each new statement of his abilities for labour, he grew more earnest and emphatic, and stretched his neck forward to catch a word of hope.

'My poor boy,' said the doctor, shaking his head, 'I'm afraid that——'

'I don't keer how hard I work, Sir,' cried the lad in a deprecating tone. 'Sun-up to sun-down I'll be at it, if I can only pick up just a bit o' schoolin'. I want to make summat o' myself. I want—I want——' And the poor fellow panted with eagerness to define the yearnings of his mind. His lips quivered, and a big tear rolled down either cheek, and Dr. Pascal's sympathies were thoroughly roused. Still, it was an awkward matter, and how to help him he did not see.

'I'm sure,' said he kindly, 'I should like to help you, but I really cannot see the way.'

'Oh, Sir, try,' said the lad, taking a step forward. 'I can live on half nothing, an' I can do a sight o' work. I can help the maids; I can run errands. O, do, do, do, Sir, give me a chance!'

The doctor was in a quandary, and to get time for thought bent his head over his papers, and began to write. Ben, for so the boy was called, read that as the sign of dismissal. He stood silent a moment, holding by the handle of the door. He heaved a sigh from the bottom of his heart; and as the doctor glanced at him, he saw the lad fingering his poor old hat confusedly with one hand, with the other he brushed the rapidly-flowing tears from his eyes. Making a rough, ungainly bow, he put his foot over the threshold, and was about to go.

'Stop,' said the president; 'I'm going to try.'

The old hat fell on the floor; the lad clapped his rough,

brown hands together; and then without a word, burst into a loud sobbing of pent-up and excited joy.

Ben Barnard was installed as assistant boot-black in Clevedon College. Nothing could surpass the diligence and willingness with which he went about his work. In his spare moments he was always getting first one student and then another to help him in his studies; and Dr. Pascal himself found a real pleasure in giving instruction to the eager boy.

Ultimately Ben was entered as a student in the university; and under these new and more favourable conditions soon went to the front rank, and took the leading honours of the college, which was proud to have his name upon its roll.

Five and twenty years after, a magnificent church was built in a certain Western city. At its consecration it was thronged by an immense crowd, who listened with death-like stillness, to one of the most learned and eloquent ministers America ever produced. In the pulpit, seated behind him, was an old and venerable looking man, who listened to the orator with a full, glad smile upon his face. At the close of the sermon, the preacher said, 'I want Dr. Pascal to speak to you. I want Dr. Pascal to give his blessing to me here before God and you. I want to give my public thanks to Dr. Pascal for his kindness to the poor little boot-black of Clevedon College.'

That preacher was the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Barnard, the president of Clevedon College, in the place of the grand old man who aided him to get a 'bit o' larnin'' in the years long gone by.

'Well done, Marion,' said Uncle Charlie, when the story was ended. 'Your little yarn is good flax well spun; and the plucky little boot-black shows us as clearly as the sun at midsummer what may be done by honest trial and hard work. There 's no royal road to learning, but where there 's a will there 's a way. It 's all very well to *wish*, and if it is a good thing you want, it is still better to pray; but if that is all you do, you may as well try to drive a windmill with a pair of bellows. Praying without trying is just as foolish as whistling for a wind in a dead calm. Bare words will buy no barley, but hard work and God's bless-

ing will win a barnful. *Wish-it-done* sat by the way-side begging; *Do-it* rode home in a coach and six; *Please-give-me* broke his teeth on a crust; *Help-myself* sat down to a sirloin of beef. What say you, Master Tom?'

'I say,' said Tom, 'that Ben Barnard was a brick, and I mean to walk into my lessons ten times harder than ever. I can't help lines of poetry running in my head, and I——'

'Let 'em run out, boy,' said Captain Charlie; 'that 'll keep the stream clear. If they are kept stagnant, they 'll grow muddy; so turn the tap for the good of the company.

'Very well,' said Tom; and forthwith repeated his extempore lines:—

> Of learning poor Benjamin felt he 'd a lack;
> To get it he set himself boots to black.
> He read and he studied with patience, and then
> Became noted and known as a teacher of men.
> If we will but learn, as we certainly may,
> Perseverance and patience will gain us the day.
> Let us use well our books, slate, pencil, and pen,
> And show we have all learnt a lesson from Ben.

'That's right, my bairns. The hand of the diligent maketh rich; and talking of riches, remember that learning is better than houses or land, and that the 'treasure' and the 'pearl' that the good book talks about are the greatest riches of all.'

Taking the old familiar Bible from the shelf, the old man read,—

'*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*

'*For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

'*She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*

'*Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.*

'*And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*'

THE NINETEENTH HOUR.

DUTY FIRST, PLEASURE AFTER.

THE March wind was holding high revel among the old beech trees of Middlethorpe Park; it whistled and soughed and moaned among and around the queer, quaint gables of the Manor House, and a cold, driving sleet, half snow, half rain, was falling through the raw, cold air as the young members of the Capstan Club gathered in the cheery old cabin. Its warmth and comfort invited them to their seats around the big log fire, which went leaping and roaring up the chimney in flaming glee, as who should say, 'Here's a brave port in a storm.'

Uncle Charlie had just returned from his customary visit to Sailor Jack, Widow Wetherill, and his other pensioners; for it would have to blow a gale like a tornado, and rain like a water spout, to keep the kindly old man within doors when the poor and needy were waiting for a look at his blithe, bluff face, and to hear the tones of his cheery voice, and to receive the welcome aid of his liberal purse.

As soon as he had taken possession of the old arm-chair in the chimney corner, he said,—

'Well, boys, are all your lessons well over? Girls, is the governess satisfied with your doings to-day?' He was assured that all the work of the day had been done with a will. 'Aye, aye,' said he, 'and so has mine; so now we may unbend again with an honest conscience. I would not give a fig for rest and

pleasure if duty is neglected. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; and all play and no work makes Jack a fool. Now that we have done the work, we 'll have the play, and plenty of it. Master Harry, overhaul the log!'

The forthcoming manuscript was handed to Miss Ida, who read out the following story.

'BEHIND THE LOOKING GLASS:'

OR, THE TIGER TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

'BERTIE, it's too warm to play any longer. I shall go and lie on the sofa a little while, to rest.'

'It *is* hot,' said Bertie, fanning himself with his straw hat, and looking as red as a peony. 'I think I'll go too. Perhaps papa and mamma will come home while we 're asleep. Wouldn't it be nice for us to wake and find them here?'

So Bertie and Jessie left the verandah where they had been playing under the broad shadow of the lime trees, and retired to a large room on the ground floor. There was a large, old-fashioned sofa there, on which the two children threw themselves, and, tired by the tropical and oppressive heat, they soon fell fast asleep.

Bertie and his little sister Jessie were the only children of the Rev. Henry Churchill, a missionary who had gone to India to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor heathen, who worship gods of wood and stone. The house in which the missionary and his family resided was a long, low bungalow, on the outside of an inland town, and in the near neighbourhood of a large Indian jungle, which stretched away nobody knows how far into the country.

The missionary's wife, who had been in delicate health, had been sent away to a more healthy place among the mountains to get restored, and Mr. Churchill had gone to fetch her home again. They were expected to return on the very day that Bertie and his sister had so tired themselves with play that they were glad to get out of the heat and take a nap upon the parlour sofa.

I want you to step in and have a look at the two children as they lie 'wrapped in slumbers deep,' for you would have to go a long way before you came upon a prettier picture. Bertie, who is a fine little fellow just turned seven years old, lies with his dark, curly head upon the sofa cushion; and by his side lies Jessie, a sweet little child of five summers. Her bright flaxen hair is thrust back in tangled locks from her brow; her head is pillowed on her brother's arm, and her own little, white, dimpled arm is thrown lovingly around his neck. There they lie, like two rose-buds on one stem, two 'sleeping beauties' on one couch.

The tall windows, which open like doors, and reach from top to bottom of the room, are thrown wide apart, and the gentle breeze which is stirring the bananas, waving the branches of the tamarinds, and bending the feathers of the palm, blows freely in, so that they can sleep in quiet comfort, and we hope they will awake refreshed. As we pass out from our visit of inspection, a tall, dark-skinned native servant, dressed in white, and with a sort of coloured turban on his head, looks in, and seeing the two children fast asleep, he noiselessly withdraws.

While Mr. and Mrs. Churchill were driving over the hills, eager to see their darlings, and dear mamma, who had not seen them for a month, was thinking how she would hug them to her heart and half devour them with kisses,—while the two children were fast asleep in each other's arms, a huge Bengal tiger, fierce and hungry, came prowling around for prey. He sniffed at the open window, and smelt the children; then softly, silently, stealthily like a cat, the savage animal entered the room, and crouching a little distance from the sofa, fixed his blazing eyes on the two sweet little ones, who lay peacefully slumbering there. If they were to move ever so little, those horrid fangs and cruel claws would in a moment have been buried in their tender flesh.

By-and-by a gust of wind blew in and stirred something on the opposite side of the room. The tiger turned his head to look in that direction, and in a large mirror which stood in the corner he saw what seemed to be another tiger glaring

fiercely at him. He arched his back and showed his teeth, and lashed his enormous tail to and fro in anger. The tiger in the mirror did just the same; so, with a growl of wrath,

the big brute dashed at his enemy and shivered the glass into a thousand pieces! Astonished, cowed, and frightened, the tiger turned round, bounded like lightning through the window

and made off into the jungle. Awakened by the noise, the startled children leaped from the sofa with a scream of fear, and stood looking in wonder at the shivered glass, which lay scattered on the floor!

'My darlings! my precious darlings! are you hurt?' shouted their mamma as she sprang through the open window, hugged them to her heart, and half smothered them with kisses, laughing and crying all the while in hysterical excitement. She and her husband had arrived just in time to see the tiger spring out of the room and bound into the bush; and hearing the scream of the children, she had run in expecting to see them bathed in blood.

'*We* didn't break the big looking-glass, mamma,' said Bertie simply, lifting his tearful eyes into mamma's face, while startled Jessie pillowed her fair head and sobbed in her mamma's lap.

'No my treasures, the looking glass has saved your lives,' and again she folded them to her breast. Then papa, who had come in for his share of loving welcome, told them of the tiger. 'And now,' said he, 'we must give God thanks for saving our darlings from such dreadful peril. They knelt upon the floor, before the ruins of the shattered mirror, and gave to heaven as warm an offering of praise and prayer as ever rose from grateful hearts.

Bertie and Jessie have now grown up to man and womanhood, and have happy homes of their own; but on the nineteenth day of June in every year they still meet their white-headed father (their mother has gone to heaven long ago), and thankfully talk over again the story of the tiger and the looking-glass.

Ida's thrilling story of peril and providence made a deep impression on all listeners, and Uncle Charlie, ever ready to extract a moral and to teach a lesson, said,—

'Bairns! that was proof enough of the care with which God guards the homes of those who put their trust in Him. Duty called the good missionary away, and God Himself stood guard over his greatest treasures until he returned. The wisest thing in the world is to put ourselves under the gracious care

of Heaven, and to pray with good Bishop Ken in his evening hymn,—

'"Keep me, O, keep me, King of kings,
Beneath Thine own almighty wings!"'

Again the big Bible was brought out, and placing it on his knees, its old familiar resting place, Uncle Charlie read,—

'*Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, thy habitation,*

'*There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*'

'I can't help thinking,' said Harry, 'that the story of the tiger may well teach us another lesson. And that is the wisdom of keeping back one's anger when other folks provoke us. The tiger growled and grew angry, and the tiger in the glass grew angry too, and that led to a fight. It would be a good thing if people who live in the same house would make it a rule that two of them would never be angry at the same time.'

'Right, boy,' said Uncle Charlie; 'or, better still, that nobody should suffer their anger to rise at all. You are quite right; it takes two to make a quarrel, and if one won't the other can't. Now, Master Tom, I see you 've got a cat in your bag. Let it out.'

'Why is Ida like Mr. Churchill's mirror?' said the punster.

The young folks didn't see it, so they gave it up.

'Why, because she 's a good looking-lass,' said Uncle Charlie. 'Overhaul the log!'

It fell to Tom's lot to obey orders, and drawing forth a folded paper, he opened it, and read the following capital fable.

THE FOX WITH THE WONDERFUL EYES.

THE lion was ill, oh dear!
The beasts of the forest were filled with fear.
Earth shook with their sighs,
And Bruin the bear had large tears in his eyes.
The jackal cried out,
With a doleful shout,

'Come and see your poor king!'
'I will!' and 'I will,' made the welkin ring.
Right loyal were they,
But the fox stayed away;
But at last, in some fear of what people might say,
He put on his best and he went one day.
He saw not the sun, and he saw not the sky,
But examined the ground with a glass to his eye.
He looked backward and forward, and sideways and round,
Indeed he observed every inch of the ground.

Arrived at the palace he knocked at the gate.
The jackal said, 'Dear Mr. Fox, you are late;'
'I come just to ask how the king is to-day.'
'O, his majesty is in a very sad way;
But you will fill him with joy and surprise;
The sight of a friend is good for the eyes.'
'I cannot come in,'
Said the fox, with a grin.
My two little eyes
Are wondrous wise;
I've seen what will fill the whole world with surprise.
His majesty's illness is murder and lies.
He keeps in his den, and he's feasting on blood;
And he would eat *me*, dear friend, if he could.
The name for your palace is slaughter and sin;
Toes seldom point out when once they point in!
'T is a murderous sin,
'T is a trap and a gin!
Those who enter that cave
Will all find a grave;
Their ruin is certain, and nothing can save.
The king is a monster and has to be fed
With the tears of the living, the flesh of the dead.
My eyes have discovered, without any doubt,
The only safe side of his palace is OUT.

You can tell him I don't care a jot how he feels.'
Then he showed to the jackal two swift pairs of heels.

Here's a moral for all who a moral can learn,
I pray you to heed it with solemn concern.
I would have you beware
Of the trap and the snare,
Of the bait and the gin,
Set by Satan and sin.
For it 's hard to get out again when you are in.
Keep outside the theatre, outside the ball;
Keep outside the gin-shop too, outside them all;
Keep outside the music hall, outside the play,
And outside the beer-house just over the way.
Keep outside where sin lurks, the lion is there,
And the monster will neither have pity nor spare.
Inside is ruin, to wither and blight,
On the outside is safety and surety and right.
Choose always the outside, for I protest,
Outside an evil place must be the best.
Remember the palace of slaughter and sin:
Toes seldom point out when once they point in.

'That 's a good lesson and no mistake,' said Uncle Charlie; 'temptation traps are sadly numerous, and those who come safely out of them are sadly few. It is best, my dear bairns, to give 'em all a wide berth.'

The old man again referred to his constant counsellor, the best of books, and read,—

'*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

'*Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.*

'*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*

'*Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.*'

The evening hymn was sung, Uncle Charlie commended his darlings to the watchful care of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps; and Capstan Cabin was again emptied of its guests.

THE TWENTIETH HOUR.

'BEGONE, DULL CARE.'

'Begone, dull Care!
I pray thee begone from me.
Begone, dull Care!
You and I can never agree.'

SO the children were singing as they sat around the Cabin hearthstone, when Uncle Charlie made his appearance, and said, as he took his seat in 'the old arm-chair,'—

'All right, my hearties! I'll join in that song with all my heart. Of all places in the world, Capstan Cabin is the last one for anything so ugly as "dull care" to find either loaf or lodging. Aye, and for that matter, I've a notion that he may be turned out of house and harbour anywhere if there be a good conscience, a trustful heart, and a praying spirit to say, "Begone!" It's not so easy to order the fellow off if sin has brought him in; then, my bairns, we shall have to go to the Cross,' said he solemnly, 'to get rid of him.

'"The less of sin, the less of care,
And both shall die if we repair,
With constant feet, to God in prayer."'

Again the well-filled Budget was produced in obedience to orders. Frank received the billet this time, and read the following story.

CHARLIE MANN'S LUCKY DAY.

'GOOD morning, mother; I 'm off to school.'

'Good morning, Charlie,' said Widow Mann, looking lovingly into the bright eyes of her only son; and away bounded Charlie to learn his lessons for the day.

Widow Mann was very poor, but very honest and very independent too; and she had managed by dint of hard work and harder living to keep herself and her bright lad out of the union.

Away went Charlie, down the lane and along the street, now whistling, now humming a stave of some school-song, and now flinging up a new ball which his mother had bought him, to see how high he could throw it and how well he could catch it. His spirits went up as high as his ball, and in his eager delight in his new possession he hit it and kicked it and threw it and caught it, until his face was as red as an apple, and until he was as warm as another one roasted and fresh from the oven.

'Ho-o-o!' said Charlie in alarm, for his new ball had gone thump through the window of Mr. Goodfellow's shop, and had knocked over some of his drug bottles into the bargain. Off ran Charlie at a gallop; then stopping short, he said,—

'No; I 'll never be a coward; I 'll go and tell Mr. Goodfellow all about it.'

In sixty seconds Charlie was in the shop, just in time to see the angry druggist rubbing his bald head with his hand, in vexation, and to hear him say,—

'Confound those young rascals! they 're always in mischief! There goes a sovereign, and who 's to pay for it?'

'If you please, Sir,' said Charlie, '*I* broke your window. I was playing with my ball and I gave it a bad throw. But I didn't mean it; and please, Sir, I am very sorry. I would pay for it every farthing, if I had the money.'

Mr. Goodfellow was a good deal taken aback as he looked into the bright, honest face of the boy. There was an unmistakable look of grief on it as he owned to his grievous blunder.

He spoke to his assistant, who was doing something at the other end of the shop awhile, and then said, 'Well, if you can't

pay for it, I can't afford to lose it anyhow. You must earn it, you know. If you come here out of school hours, I 'll find you something to do until you 've earned a sovereign and paid for the broken window.'

Charlie Mann brightened up in a moment, and with a hearty, 'O, thank you, Sir,' bounded off as fast as he could to school.

Whenever he was not at school or at meals or in bed, Charlie was at Mr. Goodfellow's, running errands, carrying parcels, sweeping the shop, or doing any other little job with which he could be entrusted. He went about his work so cheerfully, and did it so diligently, that Mr. Goodfellow was highly delighted. One evening, just before Charlie went home, Mr. Goodfellow said,—

'Look here, Charlie. Do you see this?' and he held out a bright, shining sovereign. 'You have now earned this money, every penny, and when money 's earned, you know, it ought to be paid.'

He placed the precious coin in Charlie's hand. I dare say he had never touched gold before, except his mother's wedding ring.

'Thank you, Sir,' said Charlie. 'And when folks get into other folks' debt, that should be paid, too;' and he at once handed the money back again.

'Much obliged to you, my boy,' said Mr. Goodfellow; 'I wish everybody would pay their debts as freely and as soon. Stop a few minutes, Charlie, and I will write out a receipt.'

'O, never mind, Sir,' said Charlie; 'that does not matter at all;' and he turned to leave the shop.

'Wait a minute,' said the druggist; 'I always do things ship-shape and business fashion. Never you pay a bill without getting a receipt, and keeping it. You know, I might make you pay the money over again.'

The receipt was written, neatly folded, and enclosed in an envelope with Mr. Goodfellow's address on it, and 'Prescriptions carefully prepared' printed on it.

'I think I 'd better address it to your mother, Charlie; and then she 'll know it 's all right.'

This important business being settled, my little hero made the best of his way home.

Widow Mann was glad to hear that the broken window was paid for at last. So, with a smile, she broke open the envelope to read Mr. Goodfellow's receipt. Out dropped the sovereign! She read as follows:—

'Master Charles Mann has duly discharged the debt owing to Robert Goodfellow, on account of breaking his shop window. R. G. will feel obliged if Mrs. Mann will accept the enclosed as the honest earnings of her brave boy. Furthermore, R. G. hereby offers to take the same brave boy, Charlie Mann, as an apprentice to the drug trade, without a premium; and to provide him with bed, board, clothes, and pocket money during an apprenticeship of seven years. R. G. will be glad to see Mrs. Mann, with a view to making mutual arrangements. Signed, Robert Goodfellow. P.S.—Charlie Mann is a brave boy.'

Who shall tell the joy of Charlie? Who shall describe the gladness and gratitude of Charlie's happy mother?

'Mother,' said Charlie, 'it was a lucky day, wasn't it, when I broke the window?'

'No, my dear,' said his mother; 'but it was a lucky day when you would not be a coward and had the courage to *tell the truth.*'

'Hurrah, young 'uns! That's the sort,' said Uncle Charlie, when the story was finished, for he had a righteous hatred to a lie. '"Truth lies in a well," the old proverb says; and it might be turned round the other way, "A well lies in the truth," and it will spring up in streams of happiness and prosperity to anybody who will always be straight and true. If truth lies in a well, it's never well to lie. One lie has to be thatched with another, or it 'll soon rain through; truth is waterproof, and defies the storm. When there are lies about, burn some rags and fumigate the air. An Act of Parliament ought to be passed, compelling every liar to soak his clothes with Condy's Disinfecting Fluid, for the sake of the public health. Depend on it, "out on the Highgate is aye fair play," but Crooked Lane and Bye-path are dirty roads to travel. It's a good story, my Britons; what say you?'

'Why, that Charlie Mann was a *man*ly little fellow,' said Tom.

'And had a more precious drug in his possession than any shop,' said Harry.

'He was as transparent as the window he broke,' said Ida.

'A transparency that couldn't be broken,' said Marion.

'Yes,' said Frank; 'and it must be owned that his master was a *good fellow*.'

'And that he got a *good fellow* into his shop, too,' said little Mabel.

'Hear, hear!' said Uncle Charlie. 'A Goodfellow and a Mann both by name and nature. Whatever you do, bairns, love the truth, stick to it, and never let it go. A liar can never be believed, even when he speaks the truth. "A lie has no legs." It takes one lie to up it, and ten to prop it. Of one lie comes a score, and these breed as many more. They have as many eggs as a wasp, and just as sharp a sting. He that breaks his word cracks his character, and character, like crockery, is easier broken than mended. A liar is unsound from the core to the rind, like a rotten pear. Truth keeps the crown of the causeway, falsehood lies in the ditch; and,' said Uncle Charlie with a wry face and a wrinkled nose, 'a dirty ditch it is. Lads and lasses, stick to the truth.'

'I've got a piece of poetry about that,' said Tom, 'and I should like ——'

'So should I, boy; so should we all. "Trickle away!" as the bucket said to the spout, when the shower fell,' said Uncle Charlie.

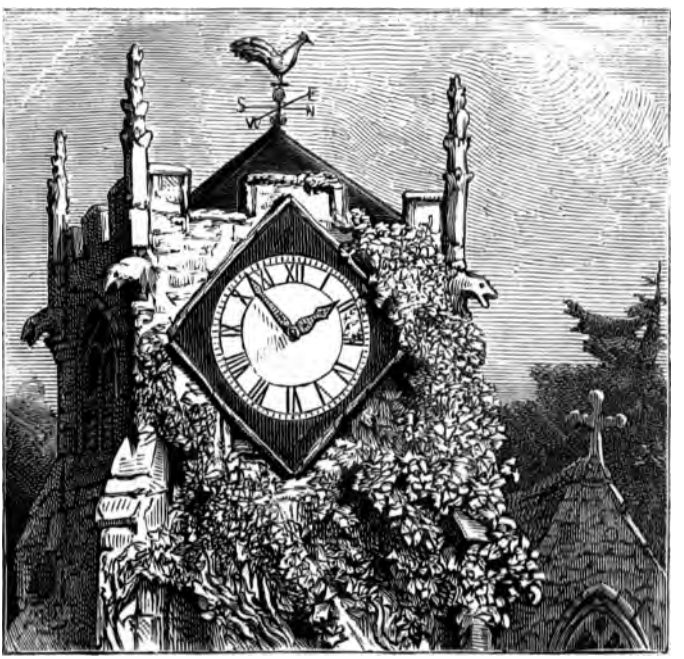
Nothing loth, Tom pulled out his verses with the air of an author, and read as follows:

TRUE AS THE CLOCK.

TAKE a lesson from the clock
In the old church tower.
'T is a steady line of conduct,
And is honest every hour.

Its fair and honest face,
  Is as open as the day;
Its features speak the truth,
  And know no other way.

Its hands are sure to tell
  The minutes as they fly;
They move along the dial,
  And scorn to tell a lie.



Its tick-tacks know no tactics;
  With measured step and slow
They tell, and tell us truly,
  How all the minutes go.

Its tongue is honest too;
  Doth ever truly tell,

By sounding every hour,
Upon the faithful bell.

Its clockwork heart, by rule,
Moves ever true to time;
Inner works and outer deeds
Make one harmonious chime.

In the same agreement
Let life and conduct be,
From all discordant act
And contradiction free.

With truthful mind and honest,
A heart that 's leal and true,
With honest face and feature,
And tongue that 's honest too

Hands and feet in concert,
Still following their lead;
Manly, open, upright,
Alike in word and deed.

Spurn every cunning trick,
And every fraud and wile;
A Christian meekly live,
In whom there is no guile.

Your epitaph be this,
Whene'er your life-path 's trod,
'Here lies an honest man,
The noblest work of God.'

'Well done!' said Uncle Charlie. 'That 's the way to live, so that we may always know what o'clock it is. Well done, Tom!'

All the young folks agreed in the praise due to the youthful

rhymester, and then, as the time had come to separate, the dear old guardian reached down the old familiar Bible, and read,—

'*The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

'*Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are His delight.*

'*Who shall ascend the hill of Zion? who shall stand in the holy place? He that speaketh the truth in his heart.*'

THE TWENTY-FIRST HOUR.

'BEAUTIFUL SPRING.'

SING, birds, sing!
Welcome Spring!
Farewell to the Winter, cold, stormy, and wild;
Peep, buds, peep!
Wake from sleep!
The springtide is coming, bright, cheerful, and mild.

Bloom, flowers, bloom!
Spring has come!
Polyanthus! bright crocus! your petals unfold.
Hail! all hail!
Primrose pale!
Sweet violet and snowdrop, peep out of the mould.

Shout, boys, shout!
March is out,
And April comes smiling with hope on its wing;
Shine, sun, shine!
Like good wine,
Come light up with gladness the beautiful Spring.

Laugh, girls, laugh!
Fresh air quaff;
Come, welcome the Spring in her garments of green;

Hum, bees, hum!
Spring has come,
Has come to strew flowers where Winter has been.

Flow, stream, flow!
Rippling go,
And chant to her praises among valleys and hills;
Play, lambs, play!
While you may,
Amid golden-eyed daisies and gay daffodils.

Hip, hurrah!
Hip, huzza!
Come, cheerily, merrily, gleefully sing;
Winter 's o'er,
And once more
We joyfully welcome thee, beautiful Spring!

Such was the song that Marion and Ida were gaily chanting as they bounded blithely along the high road that led to Middlethorpe Major.

It was the first of April, and the weather was in perfect harmony with their song. March, which had 'come in like a lion,' all bellow and bluster, had gone out like a lamb, all sunny and smiling; and this first April morning was as mild and balmy as if it was the first day of June. The warm and genial sun poured his smiling rays upon the willing earth, which gratefully flung back its exultant greeting to its long-absent friend. The birds chirped and fluttered in tree and hedgerow, the young lambkins raced and gambolled in the fields, the bees hovered over and hummed a matin bud-and-flower-song of pleasure, as they made a morning call on daisy and sloe-blossom, and such other early blooms as had opened their beaming eyes to drink the sunshine in. No wonder that the two fair damsels burst into mirthful song, and chanted the praises of 'Beautiful Spring.'

'I wish it was always spring,' said Ida, just as they were

passing the stile that led into the Sedgeley meadows; 'it's the sweetest season of the year.'

'I'm afraid we should come badly off for bread-loaves and apple-tarts if it was,' said downright Marion; 'for summer's needed to ripen the corn, and autumn's wanted to mellow the fruit; and I don't think we should enjoy any of the seasons so much if winter's frost and cold did not make us long for them.'

'Right you are, my beauty,' said Uncle Charlie, suddenly popping his head over the hedge which separated the footpath from the road; 'that's the way to look at it. A fair wind and a smooth sea are fairer and smoother after you've been tossing about in a storm. The cold, dull winter gives a brighter colour to every flower, a sweeter song to every bird, and a newer joy to everybody when the sun is welcomed back again. God hath made everything beautiful in its season.'

By this time Uncle Charlie had joined his nieces, and as he walked by their side he repeated to them the following capital lines.

DAME NATURE'S ROUND.

LADY NATURE's a dame who has plenty to do
To spread a full table for me and for you;
Her strength and her skill in full vigour to keep,
She spends a good part of each twelvemonth in sleep.

Old Winter, her chamberlain, shuts her below,
And covers her bed with a blanket of snow.
When Spring comes to wake her she slumbers no more,
For Spring's magic key quickly opens the door.

Now, my Lady in raiment of russet is seen,
Which changes by magic to tunic of green.
With Spring, to her labour my Lady has gone,
Encouraged and cheered by the smiles of the sun.

The seeds, bud, and blossom all come at her call,
And my Lady's preparing her bounty for all.
Spring goes, and gay Summer her Ladyship greets,
Expanding and nursing and ripening her sweets.

Summer brings her a robe set with many a gem,
Rare, royal, and rich, too, from girdle to hem.
She marches abroad in her queenly attire,
And her praises are sung by a musical choir.

From tree, sky, and hedgerow, the melody flows,
And my Lady has music wherever she goes.
Clad in spangles and glitter and glory and green,
She walks through the land with the air of a queen.

Summer smiles on the Dame he has helped to adorn;
He mellows her fruitage and ripens her corn;
Then glides from her presence in noiseless retreat,
And my Lady sees Autumn bend low at her feet.

He puts in the sickle, he reaps her the grain;
Binds up the sheaves for her, piles up the wain:
He plucks all the yellow fruit, gathers her store;
She, burdened with bounty, can carry no more.

My Lady goes flinging her treasures abroad,
The almoner she of a bountiful God.
In wisdom and goodness He guides her career,
That mortals may know Him and love Him and fear.

Her labour is ended; my Lady needs rest,
By the fingers of Autumn my Lady 's undressed.
Her bright-coloured garment is folded away,
Again she dons tunic of russet and grey.

My Lady is weary and longs for repose.
Winter comes again, bringing the frost on his nose,
The ice on his beard, and the snow on his head,
Leads her back to her chamber, and puts her to bed.

'There,' said Uncle Charlie, 'you see Madam Nature needs all the seasons of the year in their turn.'

'Well,' said Ida, 'at any rate, I 'm glad to see "my Lady," and much obliged to the spring for calling her so early——'

'"Call me early, mother dear,"
Though it makes me feel so queer.
I like my bed, but I'll reform;
The early bird picks up the worm.
But what was that poor worm a-doing
Up so soon? It was his ruin!'

Nobody needs to be told that this astounding rhyme came from the lips of Master Tom, who had suddenly appeared round a bend of the road in company with his illustrious brothers, and who had caught the last sentence as it fell from Ida's lips.

'Good morning, fair ladies,' quoth he, 'and thou, O gallant knight. I pray you, tell what chance hath brought you to these enchanted groves?'

'Tom's been reading the *Seven Champions of Christendom*,' said Harry; 'and his wits have gone wool-gathering after brave knights, fair ladies, enchanted castles, and wicked magicians.'

'All a parcel o' rubbish,' said Uncle Charlie; 'he'd better drink two or three gulps of sea-water to bring the sorry stuff off his stomach. The bravest knights in the world are those, whether gentle or simple, captain or cabin-boy, who "trust in God and do the right." The fairest ladies are those, whether in silk, velvet, or cotton print, who are gentle, modest, virtuous, and true; and the most wicked magicians I know anything about, are those who write foolish books to fill people's heads with nonsense and moonshine.'

A COUPLE OF CURIOSITIES.

'We'll change the subject, if you please,' said Tom with an ingenuous blush. 'Would any of you like to see a *rara avis* this spring morning, in the shape of a red sparrow with a blue tail?'

Here the young gentleman drew out from beneath his jacket a pocket-handkerchief, carefully and cautiously. He slowly unwrapped it, fold after fold, while the unsuspecting girls waited in curiosity as to what might be forthcoming. The handker-

chief proved to be empty, and Tom, looking wickedly innocent, said, 'Surely it can't have flown away! Still, queer things do happen on the *first of April.*'

'O, you bad boy!' said the irate damsels; and Master Tom had to run for it, chased by the girls along the high-road, until

they had to stop and pant for breath. Then Tom stood on guard, singing,—

'O lawks! O lawks!
It was only a hoax,
Played off upon folks
Who are partial to jokes.'

Here their attention was distracted by a loud shout from Uncle Charlie, who was laid almost full length upon a sloping bank, holding his hat firmly over something which he was anxious to capture. Harry and Frank had their softer caps ready to aid in securing the prize. Tom and the girls ran

'Walk up, walk up, ladies and gentlemen. Come and see our wonderful collection of wax figures. All of them as large as life and twice as natural! Here you will see the patriarch Abraham, a-sitting at the door of his tent, Solomon sitting in judgment on the little child. Here 's Queen Victoria in her r'yal robes, and many others too numerous to mention. Walk up! walk up! Just about to begin!'

No wonder that the little wondering Britons stood looking on, awestruck, yet longing to see the hidden glories of that magic place.

'Hallo, my hearties! Now then, tumble up, my young Britons; every man Jack of you, and every woman Jill into the bargain! I'll pay for the whole lot of you. In with you! Free, gratis, for nothing!'

So said Uncle Charlie. His young companions laughed to see the village bairns clambering up the steps and almost rolling over each other in their eager haste to see 'Queen Victoria in her r'yal robes.' Uncle Charlie handed some money to the delighted showman, and then led the way to Sailor Jack's.

As the little party passed the public-house, which stood near the churchyard gates, two young men came out, so much the worse for liquor that they reeled to and fro and had to lean against the wall or they must have fallen to the ground. Very sorry and very serious looked fine old Uncle Charlie now. Sorry that such a disgrace had fallen on the little cosy village he loved so well and of which he felt so proud; serious as he thought of the probable future of the two foolish youths; and serious, too, to think that the landlord of the inn should have permitted such a thing on the Egerton property, contrary to the tenor of his lease. On inquiry he found that the young men came from another village, and that owing to the landlord's illness a new man had charge of the bar, who was at once discharged at Uncle Charlie's request. The young people, too, were sad and sorry, and scarcely a word was spoken until Uncle Charlie lifted the latch and crossed the threshold of Sailor Jack.

'Good morning, messmate,' said the captain; 'how 's wind an' weather with you to-day?'

'Wind due south, Captain Marshall, weather as calm as a bo's'un asleep, and as bright as a summer day at sea,' said the honest tar, as he looked up from an old thumbed and dog's-eared chapbook which he had been spelling over to himself.

'I thought you seemed all atanto,' said Uncle Charlie, 'and sailing in smooth waters. I can't say that I 'm in a very sunny mood myself;' and then he told him of the sad scene at the public-house.

'Sure and sartin like rates an' taxes,' said Sailor Jack, 'I thought you were all in Queer Street. When you came in you looked as though you were in a water-logged ship an' couldn't find the leak. I was just reading about a poor drunkard, but I couldn't spell it out; may be one of the young gentlemen 'll spin the yarn for me.'

At Uncle Charlie's request Harry took the tattered little book and read the following story.

ANTHONY HAVERIL;

OR, A THOUSAND A YEAR.

YOUNG Anthony Haveril was a tailor by trade,
Turning out as good garments as ever were made.
He said, and he meant it, with conscience sincere,
'They are worthy a man with a thousand a year.'

Now, young Anthony lived in the city of York,
And the clever young tailor had plenty of work.
'If I do as I 'm doing,' said he, ''t will be queer
If I 'm one day not worth a cool thousand a year.'

But one thing could keep it from coming to pass:
Young Tony was sadly too fond of his glass;
He spent too much time at the sign of the *Deer*,
And that 's not the way to a thousand a year.

He soon grew a slave to the pipe and the pot,
And spent at the *Deer* all the money he got.
There, the foolish young tailor would boast o'er his beer
The wonders he 'd do with a thousand a year.

He grew poorer and poorer; he lost all his work;
His heart was like lead though once light as a cork.
The poor reeling drunkard was beggared by beer,
But he still maundered on about thousands a year.

'If I had a thousand a year, I 'd be rich!'
He hiccuped, and, stumbling, fell into a ditch,—
Bespattered, bemuddled, all ragged and queer;
It didn't look likely, that thousand a year.

So odd are the freaks that Dame Fortune will play;
A wealthy old aunt left him three pounds a day,
And, according to Cocker, I make it appear,
That he now had beyond a cool thousand a year.

'Hurrah!' shouted Anthony; 'now I am rich!
I'm a tailor no longer, no longer I 'll stitch.
Farewell to my thimble and goose, for it 's clear
I can live like a lord on a thousand a year!'

So Anthony Haveril soon handled his gold,
He took up as much as his fingers would hold;
Away he went off to the sign of the *Deer*,
And he drank to good luck and a thousand a year.

Now, the landlady placed him a seat by the fire,
For now he was 'Anthony Haveril, Esquire.'
No longer he called for a tankard of beer,
Champagne is the drink for a thousand a year.

Seven jolly companions came in at his call,
Champagne was right freely provided for all;
At his cost, whoever looked in at the *Deer*,
Drank the health of the man with a thousand a year!

Tony Haveril, the quondam poor tailor and sot,
Drank and squandered away all the money he 'd got;
Though his relatives warned him, he said with a sneer,
'I can do as I like with a thousand a year.'

Anthony went in for billiards, horses and hounds;
Whisky, brandy, and gin cost him hundreds of pounds;
Wine, wassail, and wantonness cost him full dear,
And made a sad hole in his thousand a year.

Every morning he drank for the ache in his head,
Every night from his bottle he reeled to his bed.
Like eagles on carcase, from far and from near
Jolly chums battened full on his thousand a year.

At length the poor drunkard's whole property went;
It was squandered and stolen and wasted and spent;
And his good friend the landlady, down at the *Deer*,
Seized all that was left of his thousand a year.

A beggar, a vagabond, starving for bread;
With no shoes to his feet, no roof for his head,
He appealed to his chums, was rebuffed with a sneer,
'You shouldn't have squandered your thousand a year.'

Poor Tony, despairing, resolved he would die;
And ran where a river was flowing hard by;
'For,' said he, 'my sad life is so wretched and drear,
It shall go to the dogs like my thousand a year.'

So saying, he plunged with a splash in the flood;
But the bath cooled the fever that heated his blood.
He made for the bank, as he said, with a tear,
'Life is precious, without any thousands a year.'

Poor Anthony Haveril stood drippingly wet,
His fingers were clenched and his teeth firmly set;
Said he, 'Living or dying, on one thing I 'm clear,
'T is "the drink" that has stolen my thousand a year.

'It has stolen my character, credit, and cash,
And would have made me a suicide, wicked and rash;
By the help of my God, a new course will I steer.
Strong drink slays its thousands on thousands a year;

'And now not a drop of strong drink will I touch,
And whether my earnings be little or much
Farewell to wine, brandy, gin, whisky, or beer!
Farewell to the thieves of my thousand a year!'

He borrowed a thimble, he borrowed some thread;
To work he went warmly, and stitched for his bread.

He oft pricked his fingers and hankered for beer,
And sighed as he thought of his thousand a year.

'Nay, nay,' said poor Anthony, 'drink was my curse;
And things are so bad that they cannot be worse;
So now, they *must* mend; no more brandy or beer
Will I drink, though I 'm offered a thousand a year.'

Though craving for liquor, he blunted its edge
With milk or with coffee, and stuck to his pledge.
Thus Anthony started a better career,
And was happy without his lost thousand a year.

He was sober and clever and busy and brisk;
He pushed his trade slowly, avoiding all risk;
Heaven answered his prayers, he conquered the beer:
And that was much better than thousands a year.

With patience and industry still did he plod,
Lived justly, loved mercy, walked humbly with God.
When the liquor was proffered which cost him so dear,
He said, 'Never; no, not for a thousand a year!'

If you walk through York streets, you may see as you go,
In big, golden letters, 'A. Haveril and Co.'
By the size of the premises, one thing is clear,
That business is done to some thousands a year.

A clothier and draper of world-wide renown
Is Anthony Haveril, and mayor of the town;
He carries a name which all good men revere;
That's better than even his thousands a year.

Now, all you young Britons, take heed to my song,
Be sure that cold water will ne'er lead you wrong.
When you 're asked to drink whisky, wine, brandy, or beer,
Say, '*Never; no, not for a thousand a year!*'

'Well done! Capital! Three cheers for Anthony Haveril!'

Such were the expressions of delight and approval which greeted the close of this excellent ditty. Sailor Jack was thoroughly excited, he flourished his hook in the air, and bringing it down smartly on the palm of his hand, he said,—

'I 'll tell 'ee what it is: rum, gin, whisky, an' all the rest of the pesky rubbish is just about the biggest mischief the

devil ever invented. If I had my will, I 'd knock the bung out of every barrel, and the cork out of every bottle, and spill the whole lot of it into the sea. No doubt it would poison some fishes, an' spoil a good deal of salt water, but it would just be the grandest thing in the world for men and women; an' the gospel would save more souls in a year than it does now in a hundred. The whole cargo 's bad, an' I would bore a hole in the bottom, and send it to Davy Jones. Every beer-house, grog-shop, an' gin-palace ought to have the pirate's black flag on it, with the death's head and crossbones for a sign, so that weak craft may steer away into the offing an' give the buccaneers a wide berth.'

Uncle Charlie looked round the cottage, and soon spied the old sailor's well-worn Bible on a little table in the corner. He placed it on his knee, turned over its sacred pages, and read,—

'*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

'*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*

'*At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*'

The old man returned the Bible to its resting-place without a word. Then, bidding Sailor Jack a hearty good day, the little party bent their steps towards Middlethorpe Manor and Capstan Cabin.

THE TWENTY-THIRD HOUR.

THE LITTLE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

IN due time Uncle Charlie and his young companions arrived at home, and after they had regaled themselves with a cup of tea, and had satisfied the healthy hunger which their long brisk walk in the spring breezes had given them, they found themselves once more in dear old Capstan Cabin. The evenings were still somewhat cold and chilly, and the usual beech-wood fire, casting its mellow glow on the old wainscot, and flickering across the cosy hearthstone, was soon surrounded by the happy youngsters; and curly-headed little Mabel, who had been left at home during the day, was seated in her old place by her uncle's knee. That fine old English gentleman had not even yet cast off the gloom which the sight of the youthful drunkards at the fair had thrown over him.

'Bairns,' said he, 'I 've got a story to tell you. The capital ballad you heard at Sailor Jack's advised you to keep out of danger. Sometimes, however, we come into the presence of a temptation that we cannot keep away from. It comes right in our way, and we have to face it as best we can. What are we to do then?'

'Why,' said Harry, 'we are to say "No," and stand fast as though we meant it.'

'Yes,' said Marion, 'our governess tells us that temptation is no sin. It is only when we yield to it and give way that we do wrong.'

'When we are faced by a temptation,' said Frank, 'if we say roundly, "I won't," we may manage to keep a good conscience in spite of it.'

'Right you are,' said Uncle Charlie; 'but you must have other strength besides your own. That's the moral of the story I am going to tell you.'

THE LITTLE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

JOHNNY MARSDEN was a poor little sweep. In the days of which I speak, the wretched little 'climbing boys,' as they were called, were sorely abused by hard and cruel masters, and were forced to creep up the dark chimneys, and through long narrow flues, choked with soot, and crooked into the bargain. The poor things were not seldom unable to get down again, and after bruising themselves with the rough bricks and mortar had to be dug out by pulling down the chimney, and often, I am sorry to say, they were dead before they could be reached.

Those sad days are over now, and if a man were to send a poor little child up a chimney in that way, he would be sent to prison.

'And serve him right,' said Uncle Charlie, who could not bear to think of such shameful cruelty without waxing indignant, and clenching his big, weather-browned hand as if he would like to tackle such a monster there and then.'

Well, as I was saying, quoth he, Johnny Marsden was a poor little sweep, who had neither father nor mother, and had been bound apprentice by the parish overseers to a chimney sweep, a hard and wicked fellow called Joe Hardman.

Johnny could just remember his mother, who used to teach him to pray and to love truth and honesty. He could remember kneeling by her lap, putting his hands together, and saying,—

'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee. Amen.'

And as he used to retire to his bed of straw, in his ragged

and sooty clothes, and fling his poor little tired limbs, sore and bruised with climbing, on that rough resting-place, he always repeated the same verse, and then, weeping for his dear mother who had loved him so, he sobbed himself to sleep.

Joe Hardman had two other boys, bigger than Johnny, who had been with him a long time, and he had taught them, whenever they were engaged in chimney-sweeping, to creep up and down the chimneys of the various rooms, and to steal anything of value on which they could safely lay their hands.

This they brought to their master, who gave them a few pence as a reward, and often many blows when they came home empty handed. Poor Johnny was cuffed and beaten and pinched and always half-starved because he would not steal, and he often wished that he could lie down somewhere and die. The other lads, set on by their brutal master, used to show him their money, or the pies, tarts, or sweetmeats they had bought, and offered to share them with him if he would do as they did.

The little orphan continued to refuse; so they laughed and sneered, called him a coward, a little parson, and kicked him off the straw. In this way, what with the master's cruelty in the day time, and the lads' persecution at night, Johnny had a harder time of it than any negro slave. He still continued, however, to repeat his little prayer every night,—

'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,'

but he felt as though he must steal something, or they would surely kill him outright.

One day he was sweeping a large chimney in the house of a great nobleman, and on coming down again, he made a mistake, turning down a wrong flue; and through an empty fire-place he crept into an elegant room, which, to Johnny's astonished eyes, looked like a picture in a fairy tale.

The carpet and the furniture, the curtains, the pictures, the glittering ornaments, were all of the richest colours, and little Johnny stood with staring eyes, astounded at the wonders of beauty and value that met his gaze. On a little table there lay a costly gold watch, with sparkling diamonds, and a fine gold chain and other trinkets.

Johnny knew that these were worth a great deal of money. He had seen just the same kind of things laid in blue velvet cushions in the jewellers' windows, and the thought came into his mind, that if he had these he could get a great deal of money for them, and that he need not then, he thought, starve or hunger any more. Then he remembered that if he had them he could never sell them, for people would know that they had been

stolen. Then a thought arose, 'If I take them to my master, he will not beat me any more, the lads will give me a place on the straw, and I shall get some money to spend as they do.'

In his excitement his eyes gleamed, and he took up the precious treasure, saying aloud, 'Yes, I'll take it.' Then he laid it down, saying, 'What! and be a thief? Yet nobody sees

me! Yes, God sees me! My mother sees me! I can't be a thief! I could not say my prayers any more. Oh, what shall I do? I'll kneel and pray just now.' Down the little fellow went, by the side of the table, with the glittering watch and trinkets just before him, and clasping his hands, he prayed,—

'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee. Amen.'

Now the tears were flowing down his sooty cheeks, making dull, white lines there, and rising from his knees, he said, '*No; I can't be a thief. I'll die first.*' So saying he hastened back to the chimney, and at last found himself at the place from which he had started. His work was done, and victorious little Johnny went his way back to blows and kicks and curses, and his miserable couch of dirty straw.

He had hardly reached Joe Hardman's house before a knock was heard at the door, and a finely-dressed footman with powdered hair was asking for the little boy who had just been sweeping one of Lord Asperton's chimneys. Johnny was called to the door. 'You are to go with me,' said the footman. My poor little hero was half frightened out of his wits, and he wondered what the big man with the gold band on his hat and the silver buttons on his coat was going to do with him.

Arrived at Asperton House, Johnny was ushered into the presence of a grandly-dressed but pleasant-looking lady, who smiled on him as she said, 'My little fellow, why didn't you take the watch to-day?' Poor Johnny fell on his knees, and began to ask her pardon. 'Nay, nay,' said my lady; 'I heard every word that you said, and I am so glad that you resisted the temptation. But what made you think of stealing it?'

Johnny told my lady the story of his sorrows, of his ill-usage, his ill-treatment from the boys, his mother's death, and all his sad and artless little story. My lady wept over the poor little waif and stray, and asked herself if she could have remained honest under such a temptation. 'My good lad,' said she, 'you shall never go back again. *I'll* see to that.'

Then out shines the sun, as bright as the noon,
And my *whole* flings its spell on the pair,
They look up with delight at the beautiful sight,
Lord Ravenscroft—Lady St. Clair.

Tom's new riddle was carefully heard and considered, but the answer was not at once forthcoming. So the usual good nights were interchanged, and once again Capstan Cabin is forsaken by its crew.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH HOUR.

HOW RALPH SMALLWOOD KILLED A GHOST.

ONCE again our youthful party and grand old Uncle Charlie assembled in their accustomed places around the Cabin fire.

'Now, you young Britons,' said the skipper. 'Why is Harry like the Chancellor of the Exchequer?'

'Because he has charge of the Budget, I suppose,' said Tom.

'Right you are, Sir,' quoth Uncle Charlie. 'Now, why is Maid Marion like somebody trying to steal a tallow candle?'

'Because she 's about "to take a dip,"' said that young lady, inserting her hand into the open bag, and handing out the following amusing story.

HOW RALPH SMALLWOOD KILLED A GHOST.

WHAT Cornishman does not know Penmarris Churchtown? It stands on the top of a high hill, whence, by a mere turn of the head, you can see the waters of the Bristol Channel on the one side and of the English Channel on the other. Its square old church tower is quite a notable landmark, anxiously looked for from the deck of many an outward-bound ship.

The ancient churchyard is bordered on the west by a row of equally aged elms, which have managed to hold their own against the rude attacks of blustering Boreas, though, as you may

believe, they have a hard time of it up there, 'when the stormy winds do blow.' Just round to the south is an old stone residence, which used to be the parsonage until the vicar sought a more sheltered spot, half way down the hill. It is now occupied by a widow lady called Trefusis, her son Alfred, and her two daughters Beatrice and Grace. This hopeful heir of little else than a good name, strong sense, and a good constitution, was a fine young fellow about one-and-twenty-years of age.

Churchtown itself consists of one street running north and south, and of a little additional patch of houses, which looked as though it had slid somewhat down the hill, and showed a dilapidated appearance in consequence. Nearly in the centre of the town was the smithy, in which a brawny son of Vulcan, Ralph Smallwood by name, used to swing the hammer on the ringing anvil at such times as he was neither Sunday-keeping, eating, sleeping, nor drunk. I am sorry to say that this latter was very often the case, and that Ralph Smallwood was in the habit of slaking his thirst almost as often as he slaked his iron in the stone-trough, which stood at the end of his smithy hearth. In all other respects, Ralph was a very decent and respectable kind of fellow. Alfred Trefusis had tried hard to reclaim the stalwart blacksmith from his intemperate habits, and to induce him to give up his visits to the *Red Lion*, whose rampant image was no bad illustration of the mischief-making business carried on inside. Though his well-meant efforts were only partially successful, the burly blacksmith held him in very high esteem.

One Christmas Eve, or rather a few hours before the evening fell, Ralph Smallwood was sent for to a farmhouse some two miles' distance, in order to repair certain pipes which had burst through the severity of the frost. As he passed along by the low churchyard wall, under the row of aged elms, he met Alfred Trefusis, who was just returning from a long and weary walk over the snow from Carlyon Castle, whither he had been on an errand for the bank, in which he held a responsible position. He had received payment of a sum of three hundred and fifty pounds; and in consideration of the long and difficult journey, and of the nearness of Christmas Day, he had been told by his employers, that, instead of returning to Penruth, where the

bank was situated, he might carry it home, and bring it with him on his return to duty after the great Christmas festival was over.

'Hallo, Ralph! here's weather!' said Alfred, speaking through his muffler, which was coated with ice; for he had walked through a biting wind, in which his breath congealed almost as soon as it left his lungs. 'Whither are you bound? Experience teaches wisdom; and I advise you to keep near the smithy fire. The frost is enough to bite one's head off.'

'A merry Christmas to you, Master Alfred! Depend upon it, I shouldn't go sprawling over the downs to-day if it could be helped; but needs must when a certain party drives, you know. Farmer Truscott's boiler pipes are burst, an' I must go and put 'em to rights for Christmas day.'

'Well, well,' said Alfred, 'I wish you safely back again, and a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Ralph,' said he, taking his hand, 'your Christmas will be all the merrier, and your new year all the happier, both to you and yours, if you would give up the beer. I would freely give a month's salary to see you a sober man and a steady Christian.'

'I believe you, Mr. Alfred,' said Ralph warmly; 'I haven't gone wrong since you spoke to me a fortnight since, an' I never mean to make a fool of myself again.'

'May God help you, Ralph. Do seek for that help for yourself.'

So saying they separated; Ralph Smallwood outwards to Farmer Truscott's, Alfred Trefusis homewards to the old parsonage, his mother's welcome, and his sisters' smiles. A sudden thought struck Alfred, and turning back, he shouted, 'Hi! Ralph!'

'The blacksmith retraced his steps amid the now rapidly descending snow.

'I'm within a stone's throw of home,' said Alfred. 'You'll find it's a bitter blast over the moor. Take my muffler, and wrap it well round your neck.'

By this time he had divested himself of his woollen comforter and forced it into Smallwood's half-unwilling hand. Prudently diving into his inner pockets, his benumbed fingers

managed to extract his pocket handkerchief; then regirding his coat around him, he held the silken substitute to his mouth, and hastened home, pretty well powdered over by the flakes of fast-falling snow.

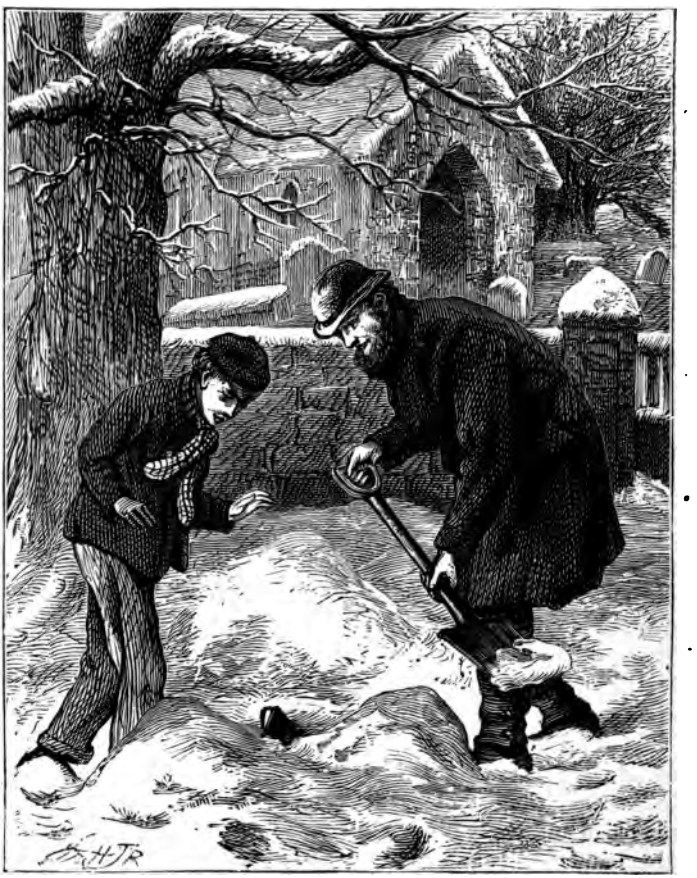
Little Dick Smallwood, a sharp-looking little fellow of ten, with two or three playmates, were busily engaged in the front of the house, in rolling a snowball, which as yet had not attained to large dimensions, but to judge by their eager toil and evident enjoyment was likely to assume a very bulky shape indeed. Alfred was much amused to note the ardour of their toil, and flinging them a cheery word entered his mother's house. It was not until the shades of evening had gathered round that Alfred remembered the costly parcel which he held in trust. He at once proceeded to satisfy himself that all was right; what was his astonishment and distress to find it gone! Uttering a cry of surprise, he announced to the startled household his tremendous loss. He knew that the pocket-book in which the notes were folded was in his possession not long before he met with Ralph Smallwood, and he felt convinced that the transfer of the muffler and the extraction of his handkerchief had led to the sad calamity which had befallen him.

Hastily donning his great coat, taking with him a lighted lantern, and accompanied by the younger members of the now saddened circle, Alfred commenced what he feared must be a vain and hopeless search. Retracing his steps slowly and wistfully to the spot where he had met Ralph Smallwood, he poked with hand and foot among the snow through all the region round about, and at last, disheartened and distressed, he returned home, heedless of the sympathetic condolences of his companions. He then visited the home of the blacksmith, and had little Dick Smallwood summoned out of his beauty sleep with the hope that he perhaps had seen it during their frolic in the snow. All in vain; and his last hope lay in the burly blacksmith, who might, somehow or other, have received it with the muffler, whose lengthy dimensions had been enfolded round his waist. Ralph, however, had not yet returned from Farmer Truscott's, so Alfred turned his steps to the old parsonage with a heavy heart. His mother was a godly woman, and she hastened to comfort her son, bade

him put his trust in Providence, and made earnest prayer at the family altar for God's helping and delivering care.

We must now turn our attention to Ralph Smallwood, whose workmanlike abilities were performing wonders on Farmer Truscott's broken pipes. That bluff and hearty tiller of the soil was greatly pleased with the blacksmith's ready response to his urgent call. His usual freehandedness was increased by the 'festive season;' and so, as soon as Ralph arrived, he mixed for him a potent glass of spirits, to brace him for his work after his weary trudge across the moorland and the snow. After the lapse of a few hours, refreshment was again forthcoming, consisting of bread and meat, and another too-bountiful jorum from the decanter. When the work was finished, at a very late hour, a third supply of the treacherous liquor was appropriated by the too-willing smith; and then when he was ready to start on his homeward track, and Alfred's muffler was wrapped around his throat, a final glass was offered by the thoughtless farmer, and as eagerly swallowed by poor forgetful Ralph. Once outside the farm gate, Ralph posted off with somewhat devious gait towards Penmarris. The farther he went, the warmer grew his blood and the stronger grew the influence of the spirits he had drunk. Nearing the aged elms, through which the wind was moaning with a weird and uncanny sound, Ralph found himself disturbed by depressing memories and fancies of midnight spirits and churchyard ghosts. He cast a wistful eye around him, as he plunged under the shadow of the trees, which, snow-laden, loomed like giant spectres through the gloom. The clock in the grim church tower boomed out the midnight hour in doleful knell which oppressed him more and more. He started at every sound, and every now and again looked round with scared and furtive glance; when lo! just at the corner of the churchyard wall, where the row of trees ended, he saw a sight which curdled his blood and made his hair to stand on end. There, standing dread and ghastly and white, by the churchyard wall, sheeted and spectral, was a veritable spirit, whose awful presence filled his soul with fear. With a sudden reaction, caused by the Dutch courage inspired from Farmer Truscott's decanter, our poor Ralph braced himself for action! Marching boldly up to the

grim and ghostly goblin, Ralph shouted, 'Who are you?' and in a moment he aimed at it a couple of blows—one, two, direct from the shoulder! A dreadful chill, as of contact with the unearthly, froze his veins, a cold, clammy vapour made him shiver



as he stood, and with a low, crepitating moan the ghost faded from his view!

'I've killed a ghost! I've killed a ghost!' shouted Ralph,

as he took to his legs and hastened to the protection of his wife and the shelter of his home. He poured into the ears of his anxious spouse the story of the murderous deed; but she, poor woman, paid small attention to what she took to be the maunderings of drunkenness, and took painful notice of his sad indulgence in what had been so long the bane and sorrow of their home.

Next morning Ralph Smallwood was regaled by his hopeful son Dick with the story of the glorious fun which he and his young comrades had had on the previous afternoon, in the rolling of a huge snowball, and the construction of a snow man on that bulky sphere. Of this, however, Ralph took little notice; all his sympathies were enlisted on behalf of Alfred Trefusis, with whose serious loss his wife had made him acquainted. Conscious that he should lose ground in the estimation of that youth if last night's lapse should come to his ears he longed to do something to retrieve his position.

'I'll find that pocket book,' said he, 'if it's above ground.' Here he brought his hand down on the table like one who meant it, and hastened off, with Dick by his side, to set about the search. As they neared the churchyard wall, little Dick said,—

'O, father, come and see the snow-man that we made yesterday. I don't think you could have made a better yourself. It 's just round the corner.'

Led by the eager boy, Ralph turned aside to look at the amateur model, and Dick brought him to the very spot where he had fought the fatal duel with the ghost.'

'Why, it's gone!' said Dick, in accents of dismay; 'somebody 's gone and been an' knocked it down!'

A light broke in on Ralph's understanding, and he stood gazing, quite ashamed of his folly, on the remains of his ghostly victim. Musing over his voluntary separation from his wits, he began kicking in pieces the globular basis on which the hapless ghost had been pedestalled in pride. As the fragments flew hither and thither, a snow-clad something of firmer substance met his foot. Stooping down, he laid hold of—*the lost pocket-book!* With a shout of delight he held it up to Dick's astonished gaze. It was evident that the monster snowball had

rolled over the missing treasure, which had become embedded in its bulk, and of course each additional rolling over had hid it more deeply in its frosty bed.

I need not tell with what willing and rapid feet the triumphant blacksmith made his way to the old Parsonage, nor with what joy and gladness the recovered prize was welcomed by Alfred Trefusis and his grateful mother, nor the warm and heartfelt thanks which greeted Ralph, who was proud to hear them, and his son, who was as proud as he.

Of course in detailing the events which led to the recovery of the pocket book Ralph had to acknowledge his fault as to Farmer Truscott's whisky; this he did with a very ingenuous blush, which augured well for his state of mind. Alfred Trefusis shook him by the hand, and said,—

'Ralph, if you *will*, you can knock that *spirit* over just as completely as you killed the ghost. Hit out, my friend, and ask God to help you, and you will find that bank notes and something better will come to you when the victory is gained. Will you, Ralph?'

'By God's help I will!' said Ralph; and by God's help he did, and he and his happy wife and children are as happy always as Alfred Trefusis was on that Christmas morning when Ralph Smallwood came, pocket-book in hand, to tell him 'how he had killed a ghost!'

The youngsters in Capstan Cabin were mightily tickled by the 'ghost story' they had just heard, and Uncle Charlie too.

'Yes,' said he; 'I hate quarrelling. To my mind fighting is one of the most wicked things in the world; but when it comes to fighting *spirits* I don't care how hard you hit 'em, and you 've my permission to kick 'em when they are down, for they are a bad lot, decanters and barrels and bottles and all.'

The Children's Hour was again over, and with hearty good nights to Uncle Charlie, the young folks retired to rest, and left the failing embers in Capstan Cabin to die out into the dark.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH HOUR.

'A TALE OF A TUB.'

WHEN the genial and wise old skipper again assembled with his cheery companions in Capstan Cabin, he said,—

'That story about Ralph Smallwood and his "spirits" reminded me of a capital little fable that I once heard; and if you like, I 'll spin you the yarn at once.'

The idea of their *not* liking any yarn that Uncle Charlie was likely to spin was in itself a good joke, and so Master Tom said very soberly,—

'Well, we 'll do our very best to bear it, and if we feel that we can't stand it, Uncle, we 'll let you know. Only please to go on till we tell you to stop.'

'Hold hard, young 'uns!' said Uncle Charlie, in response to the boisterous laughter that followed. 'I 'm an "Ancient Mariner" you know, and you remember what a job it was to get rid of one specimen of that sort; so take care. The story that I am going to tell you is in poetry.'

A TALE OF A TUB.

COME hither, youths and maidens,
And listen while I tell
Of a very fast young gentleman,
And what to him befell.

A smart young mouse and dapper,
Who nothing knew of fear,
Resided in a brewery
Of sparkling ale and beer.

'*I'll* never drink,' quoth Master Mouse,
'And *that* I know full well.
'Good,' said his wise old mother,
'*Then never go and smell!*'

My lord was mighty confident;
'Oh, oh!' said he, 'I've skill,
No matter what the danger is,
To keep myself from ill.'

He thought he was as clever
As ever a mouse could be,
But whether he was right in that
We very soon shall see.

Whene'er an open barrel in
The brewery was found,
To the grief of his old mother
He *would* run round and round

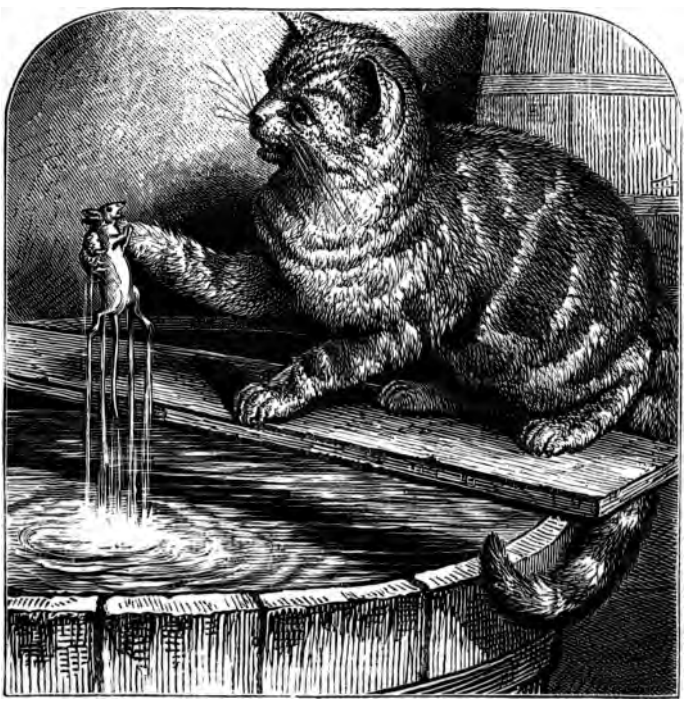
The upper rim of danger, just
Above the sparkling beer.
The old lady often warned him,
'Do come away, my dear.'

'Oh, oh!' said he; 'no danger; I
Can do it very well.'
He did it once too often, for
He slipped, and down he fell.

In vain he struggled in the flood,
And just when sinking down
He cried, 'O, save me, save me!
And do not let me drown!'

Up jumped Grimalkin quickly,
A grim and grey old puss,
And mewed, 'What *is* the matter?
The meaning of this fuss?'

'Help, help! Grimalkin, help!'
As hard as he could shout,



Was Master Mouse's answer;
'Grimalkin, lift me out!'

'I will on one condition,' said
Grimalkin with a grin;
'If I take you out of *that* now,
Will you let me *take you in?*'

'Oh, I'll agree to anything,
But do not leave me here;
My friends could never lift their heads
If I should die in beer.'

Grimalkin stretched a helpful paw
And drew him out half dead.
'I'll rest before I eat you, Sir,'
The stern deliverer said.

Master Mousey pricked his ears,
Grimalkin, winking, lay,
Into a hole in the corner
Young Mousey dashed away.

'Come out, come out; you *promised* me,'
The cat, indignant, said;
The mouse peeped out with roguish eye,
And shook his little head.

'I know I promised, Pussy, but
You needn't fret or bicker;
At the moment that I said it, *I*
Was very much in liquor.

'Of course it's very sad, I know,
That you have lost your dinner,
And it was very bad of me
That I was such a sinner;

'But I've learnt a lesson, Pussy,
That I never shall forget:
There are perils in the barrel,
Much worse than getting wet.

'I'll never more go near the drink,
Or smell the brewer's vat;
I'll neither drown in liquor, nor
Be eaten by a cat.

'My mother's good advice, Sir,
I will act on from this day:
Wherever there is danger, Sir,
'T is best to keep away!'

'That 's the lesson to be learnt, bairns,' said Uncle Charlie when the little ballad was finished. 'It 's always wise to get as far away from temptation as you can, for temptation is like a magnet, which loses its power by distance. Do you remember the story of the old gentleman who

'WANTED A COACHMAN?'

SOME of the young folks remembered the story, and some of them did not; but they were all alike in their desire to hear Uncle Charlie relate it.

'Why, said he, 'old Mr. Caleb Cautious wanted a coachman, and so he advertised in the papers, "Wanted a coachman who understands his business. None but those with cool heads and steady hands need apply." On the day appointed there were several knights of the whip who made application for the vacant post, and finally, he sent them all away but three, who seemed to him to be the cream of the company. He sent for the first of these into his private room, and said,—

'"Well, my man, suppose I wanted to go to a place, and had to pass a steep cliff to get there; now, how near could you drive without tippling the coach over?"

'"Well," said the man, "I'm quite certain I could drive within a foot of the edge without turning over."

'"Well, that's very clever, indeed," said Caleb Cautious, "but it isn't good enough for me." So he passed him out by another door, and rang for the second man.

'"Well, my good fellow, you seem likely to suit. But I want to ask you a question." And he asked him the same thing he had put to the other man.

'"O," said the man, with much confidence, "I could drive so near to any precipice, that there should only be the width of the wheel between, and you should still be as safe as the bank."

'"Well," said the old gentleman, "that's fine driving, but it isn't good enough for me." So he passed him out by the opposite door, and sent for the third.

'"How near could you drive to a precipice without falling over?" said the old gentleman.

'"Why, Sir," said the man, "the fact is, I never tried to see how *near* I could go; *my* business *is to keep as far off it as I can.*"

'"You are the man for me, then," said Mr. Cautious; and hired him on good wages there and then.

'That's it, bairns. *Keep away from danger. Touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing. Avoid the very appearance of evil.* But I'll tell you what it is. We can't do it without help. I'm an old man now, and you are all young; so I want to tell you what I've found out. It is this: Live every day in the habit of asking God in prayer for power to do right. That's the way, the only way, to live safe, to do right, to please God, and to die happy. Mabel, my darling, what was that little song you were repeating to me this morning? It'll do us all good.'

So Mabel repeated, in her sweet young voice, the following lines.

DON'T FORGET.

I KNOW a little lady,
Sunny as the day;
Many things she prizes,
And she loves to pray.

Her brother had a linnet;
Would have had it yet,
But to feed the birdie
Johnnie did forget.

'Right, my darling,' quoth Uncle Charlie; 'that 's the grand secret of life. That 's the way to be both good and happy, both safe and prosperous. The good Book says, "*Pray without ceasing,*" and then follows, "*In everything give thanks;*" for you may depend upon it, that they who do the first will always be glad to do the last. A praying heart 's a praising heart. Try it, bairns, and see.'

Evening prayer and praises concluded the Children's Hour, and Capstan Cabin was once again forsaken of its guests.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH HOUR.

HARRY HOLMAN'S HOLIDAY.

OUR young friends were once again snugly seated in their favourite quarters, and Uncle Charlie, who for some reason, unknown to his wistful wards, seemed to be out of his 'usual spirits,' directed Harry at once to 'overhaul the log.' It fell to Tom's lot to 'dip' and to read the following little story.

HARRY HOLMAN'S HOLIDAY.

HURRAH! hurrah! Up went a hundred voices, and a hundred hats—straw, cloth, and felt—to bear them company, for the boys in the Arkley Day School had just got a holiday, and the prize was all the sweeter because it was unexpected.

Ten minutes before, those hundred boys were seated at their desks pegging with pen and pencil under the master's eye—making 'pothooks,' writing large hand or copying exercises, doing sums from simple addition to duodecimals—when all of a sudden, in comes a telegram! The master is summoned to go on a journey at once. 'Boys,' quoth Mr. Rodwell, 'you can have a holiday to-day!' With one consent the boys looked at him, unable to believe their ears; then they looked through the windows at the sunny June weather, and in two minutes and three-quarters by the clock they were all out in the street, shouting

sunny morning, this bright, sunny boy had his hand on the latch of his mother's door, and bounding over the threshold, he greeted her with, 'Mother, we 've a whole day's holiday, an' I 've come to help you!'

'O, I *am* so glad,' said the widow, with a gleam of satisfaction. 'Now, you 'll take Ben and Lucy out, and I can get all my fine starch work done ready for the Hall.'

In a few minutes Harry had a hunk of bread and treacle in his hand as big and as sweet as such a good little boy deserved, and when that was stowed carefully away somewhere behind his waistcoat buttons, he seized his chubby brother and bore him off to Farmer Bluff's orchard close by, for the neighbourly farmer let the widow have the use of it for a drying ground for her linen and a playground for her children; then he went back and brought his little sister, and there, amongst the buttercups and daisies, they romped and shouted and laughed and played to their heart's content.

Meanwhile, the mother had a fair chance to finish her work; and I may tell you that she worked all the harder because her love and gratitude to Harry filled her heart with gladness, trembled in her veins right up to the tips of her fingers, and sent the flat-iron skimming over the snow-white linen as if it was bewitched. Long before three o'clock her work was done; so she 'tidied herself up a bit,' as she called it, and then went to the orchard to see how the bairns were getting on. There was Master Ben, crowing and laughing under a crown of buttercups, while Miss Lucy was adorned with a treble necklace of daisies, and Harry was singing,—

'Crown King Ben
King of big men!
Crown Lucy queen!
Never was seen,
With a robe and a ring,
Such a queen and a king!'

Up comes Farmer Bluff, his face all in a ripple with kindness and good temper.

'Hallo, Harry!' said he, 'how is it you aren't off with the

boys in Arkley Wood? I passed them just now, and they are having a fine time of it, I can tell you.'

''Cause I knew that mother would want me,' said Harry.

'Harry Holman,' said Farmer Bluff, 'you are a brick and a beauty, a brave Briton and a bouncing blessing; and you shall have your holiday or I 'm a benighted heathen!'

Mrs. Holman was sent to get her bonnet and shawl. Farmer Bluff took all four of them into his house and gave them a dinner fit for the royal family; then the farmer's spanking bay mare, harnessed to the dogcart, was brought round to the front door. The entire Holman family were bundled in, Farmer Bluff took the reins, and away they went, up hill and down dale, through Arkley Wood, Crosby Copse, over Bronsbury Beacon, and so round by Farnworth Water-mills, through Squire Henderson's park, and after many and many miles of pure, delightful travel, they arrived at home in the rosy light of the setting sun, and no words can express the keen enjoyment felt by the happy excursionists in that never-to-be-forgotten ride.

Farmer Bluff put a bright new silver shilling into Harry's hand as he bade him good night, saying,—

'Harry Holman, that 's for the boy who is man enough to turn his back on pleasure to go and do his duty, and will cheerfully sacrifice his holiday because his "mother 'll want him"!'

But after all, the richest reward Harry Holman got that day was his mother's kiss as she smoothed his pillow and said, as a tear of love dropped upon his cheek, 'God bless my boy!'

'Three cheers for Farmer Bluff,' said Uncle Charlie. '*He* was a brick and a Briton, too, and no mistake.'

'Three cheers for Harry Holman,' said Mabel, 'who loved his mother so well. How sweet it must be to have a mother!'

Then there were ever so many wet eyes, and Uncle Charlie's white head was bent low, and there fell a silence on the little group.

'God bless you, my dear bairns!' said Uncle Charlie tenderly. 'You have a mother, who loves you dearly still. Be good and

true, and you will one day hear her sweet voice again. Now, Ida, my dear, it 's your turn at the Budget.'

Ida brought up still another story of filial duty.

THE MOTHER AND HER SONS.

A TALE OF THE OLDEN TIME.

CYDIPPE was a priestess,
A priestess of renown,
In Juno's sacred temple,
She of the sacred crown.

A grand and glorious feast-day
Was held in Juno's honour,
The citizens of Argos
All thronged to wait upon her.

To-day they worship Juno
In solemn sacrifice;
And young and strong and aged
Join in the glad emprise.

The hour for temple service
Is now almost at hand,
Cydippe, the fair priestess,
Must by the altar stand.

Her chariot is not ready,
Though Cydippe waits to go;
Where are the milk-white oxen?
The drivers must be slow!

'T is time, 't is time for service,
Queen Juno cannot wait;
And shall all hear, both far and near,
Her priestess came *too late?*

Here come Cleobis, Biton—
  Cydippe's noble sons;
Themselves they quickly harness,
  And each with ardour runs.

Up, up the mountain sped they
  As fleetly as the wind,
With their mother, the fair priestess,
  In the chariot behind.

They reached the temple breathless,
  But Cydippe was in time!
The crowd that thronged the city
  Cheered the deed sublime.

With shouts the waiting priesthood
  Unbarred the temple gate:
'The sons have done it nobly,
  And the mother is not late!

'Their filial love and duty
  Greece never will forget.'
And down the distant ages
  We hear the echo yet.

Cydippe, the proud mother,
  With eyes that brimmed with love,
Bowed low before fair Juno,
  The queenly wife of Jove,

And asked a queenly blessing
  For her sons who bore the yoke:
A deep sleep fell upon them,
  And then Queen Juno spoke,—

'Arise, ye noble brothers!
  To Mount Olympus rise;
And for your love and duty
  Come, dwell above the skies.

'Thy noble sons, Cydippe,
Thy happy eyes shalt see
Crowned with the wreaths of glory
For the love they showed to thee.'

'Hear, hear!' said Uncle Charlie. 'They who honour and love their parents are always honoured and loved themselves. The good Book promises all sorts of blessings to dutiful children.'

Taking the old familiar Bible on his knee, he read,—

'*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*'

The evening hymn was sung, and then dear Uncle Charlie commended his orphan darlings to the keeping of their heavenly Father, and the little company once more dispersed.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH HOUR.

'BLOW, BREEZES, BLOW!'

WHEN the merry youngsters of Middlethorpe Manor again assembled in Capstan Cabin, there was a feeling of sadness pervading the usually happy group, which neither the cheery hearth nor Uncle Charlie's cheerier voice was sufficient to remove. What put them in low spirits was the unwelcome news that Uncle Charlie was about to leave them for a long voyage and an absence extending over the months of summer, though he expected to return before all the filberts were gathered and the mellow fruit had been plucked from orchard and wood.

Uncle Charlie's property was in the West Indies, and owing to the death of his agent and some other changes, he had found it necessary to go and visit his estates himself, with the intention of selling them outright, so as to be quite free to spend his declining days in the company of the sweet and pleasant family of children whom he loved as his own soul. The shadow of their impending loss sat very heavily on the youthful band, and the hearty old tar himself was disturbed and troubled a good deal more than he cared to own, but which he tried for their sakes not to let them see. So he opened the proceedings with his usual bluff heartiness, by rolling out a favourite sea song.

BLOW, BREEZES, BLOW!

BLOW, breezes, blow! Blow high, blow low,
We 'll neither fear nor wonder;
Comes by-and-by a clear blue sky,
And a calm blue ocean under.

Storms die in calms, sighs swell to psalms,
And joy comes after sorrow;
The outward bound, as time goes round,
Sails home again to-morrow.

Although farewell is hard to spell,
And sadness lies in parting,
The voyage done, the harbour won,
Then we forget the smarting.

The parting o'er, we look the more
With joy to future meeting;
For those who mourn the tide shall turn,
And bring a happy greeting.

Then, breezes, blow! Blow high, blow low,
We care not for the weather;
The outward bound, when time comes round,
Will bring old friends together!

'Now, my beauties,' quoth he, 'we must post the log and square accounts before the ship 's docked and the crew paid off. Master Harry, that last queer riddle propounded by Master Tom has not received an answer. If you 've got the article anywhere, bring it into daylight.'

Hereupon that young gentleman made his bow and read the following answer,—

The deer was laid low by Lord Ravenscroft's *bow;*
In the *rain* rode my lady St. Clair;
And then upon high, like a gem in the sky,
A *rainbow* shone down on the pair.

'Now, Maid Marion,' said Uncle Charlie, 'dip your hand into the lucky bag, and let's see what comes to wind up our evenings in Capstan Cabin.'

Marion brought out a little but beautiful fable.

THE BEAUTIFUL HAND.

THREE fair girls were seated on a mossy bank by the borders of a rippling stream, which flowed in silver beauty at their feet. It was a beautiful picture. The sun was gilding all things with a golden brightness, and lighting up the features of the young and mirthful damsels. They were merrily engaged in wreathing garlands of wild flowers, and decking each other with flowery coronets woven by their own fairy fingers.

By-and-by they began to compare the size and beauty of their hands, and each disputed with the other whether hers were not the loveliest of all. One washed her hands in the limpid stream, and let the pearly drops trickle from her fingers; another plucked wild strawberries, and stained her finger tips with a ruddy pink; the third gathered sweet violets until her hands were redolent of their fragrance; and all were beautiful.

An aged and haggard woman, clad in the garb of meanest poverty, drew near, saying, 'Give me of your charity; I am very poor.' All three denied her; but a fourth girl, who sat close by, with hands unwashen in the brook, unstained with fruit, unscented with flowers, gave the poor woman a little gift with a kindly smile, and received her grateful thanks.

Then the aged woman asked them the subject of their dispute, and they told her, lifting up their beautiful hands. 'Beautiful indeed!' said she. But when they asked her which was the *most* beautiful, she said,—

'It is not the hand which was washed in the stream, it is not the hand which is tipped with red, it is not the hand with the fragrant flowers; but it is the hand which *gives to the poor* which is the most beautiful. As she said these words her wrinkles fled, her staff was thrown away, and a beautiful angel stood before them. She touched the generous girl with her

hand, and said: '*Your* beauty, my child, will last for ever.' Turning to the rest, she said: 'The loving heart and the kindly

hand are always beautiful, and where these are not there is no beauty left.' And straightway she vanished out of their sight.

'Right,' said Uncle Charlie; 'beauty is but skin-deep, and I would rather have the rough brown fist of Sailor Jack than the fairest hand that ever wore diamonds, with a proud, unfeeling heart behind it. The good Book tells us of One whose hands were pierced with nails, and whose "visage was more marred than any man's;" and yet He was the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The more we are like Him, however plain in feature, rude in form, or coarse in raiment, the more truly beautiful we are. "Wisdom," which is the fear of the Lord, that is beauty, my bairns; and you may all have it, and so win a loveliness that is delightful both to God and man. Hark again to what is said in the best of books:

'*Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.*

'*She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*'

Little Mabel, who had been listening to her uncle's words with great seriousness, softly and sweetly repeated the following beautiful lines.

BEAUTIFUL FOR EVER.

LIKE Jesus I will strive to be:
For that 's the highest duty,
That has the greatest charm for me,
And that the greatest beauty.

Embroidered robes and beauty's hues,
Attractive form and feature,
Are all surpassed in those who choose
The Saviour for their teacher.

I 'll sit, and sweetly learn of Him,
Of Him the meek and lowly;
Better than charm of face and limb
A life that 's true and holy.

His robe of righteousness I 'll wear,
That pattern is the fairest;
No raiment can with this compare,
The richest and the rarest.

His grace shall fill my heart with love,
A love that 's always beaming;
His light shine on me from above,
A light that 's always gleaming.

His smile shall fall upon my face,
And, by His Spirit directed,
The glory from His holy place
Shall be by me reflected.

Jesus, my Life, my Truth, my Way,
Shall order my behaviour,
To live, to speak, to walk for aye
Just like my Lord and Saviour.

Like Him I would be good and kind,
In love with truth and duty;
His noble, patient, spotless mind
Is pure and perfect beauty.

I ask no gems or costly dress,
No earthly charms I covet,—
Only His likeness to possess,
To do His will and love it.

Our Father loves the dutiful;
And from His throne He sees us,
And smiles and calls us beautiful
When we resemble Jesus.

This inward beauty cannot die,
This glory fadeth never;
Who live like Jesus shall on high
Be beautiful for ever!

'Bless your majesty's royal heart, Queen Mab, that 's beautiful too, and as true as it 's beautiful,' said Uncle Charlie; and as the tears rushed into his eyes in spite of himself, he proceeded: 'We could not have had anything better to wind up our pleasant evenings in Capstan Cabin. And when I 'm gone away, my blessed bairns, nothing will cheer your Uncle Charlie's heart more than to think that you are all trying, every day, to be more like Jesus. Cheer up, my hearties!' said the grand old man, as he saw the tears of grief for his departure starting in every eye. 'Cheer up! I shall be back again by God's good providence in a few months. A sea-voyage will brush the cobwebs away, and make me almost young again. When your next holidays come round, I shall be home for good and all, sailing into harbour with a fair wind and colours flying; and when I drop my anchor in Middlethorpe Haven, we 'll make the old Cabin ring again with merriment. It 'll go hard with me and Sailor Jack if we don't bring many a racy story back to tell around the beech-wood fire. Don't forget the Budget. By the time I get back it 'll be as big as a woolsack, and as rich in treasures as the Bank of England. Until our next merry meeting, God bless you all!'

Here Uncle Charlie fairly broke down. By-and-by the big Bible was placed on his knee; they all joined in singing the beautiful hymn, 'Abide with me." He read the ninety-first Psalm,—

'*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*'

Then kneeling down, the dear old man commended himself and his precious bairns to the loving care of their heavenly Father. The children half smothered him with tearful kisses, and Capstan Cabin was emptied of its familiar guests.

We hope before the winds of autumn have shaken all the leaves from the trees, to meet our young friends and the grand old Captain again. Until then we bid good bye to our readers in the words of Uncle Charlie,

'God Bless You All!'

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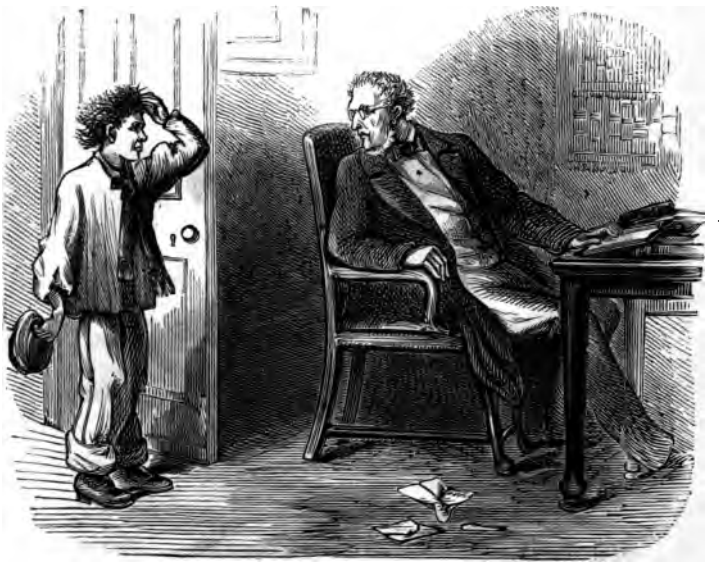

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